Mondaiji-tachi ga isekai kara kuru soudesu yo Volume 8

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These are novel illustrations that were included in volume 8.

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問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？

暴虐の三頭龍

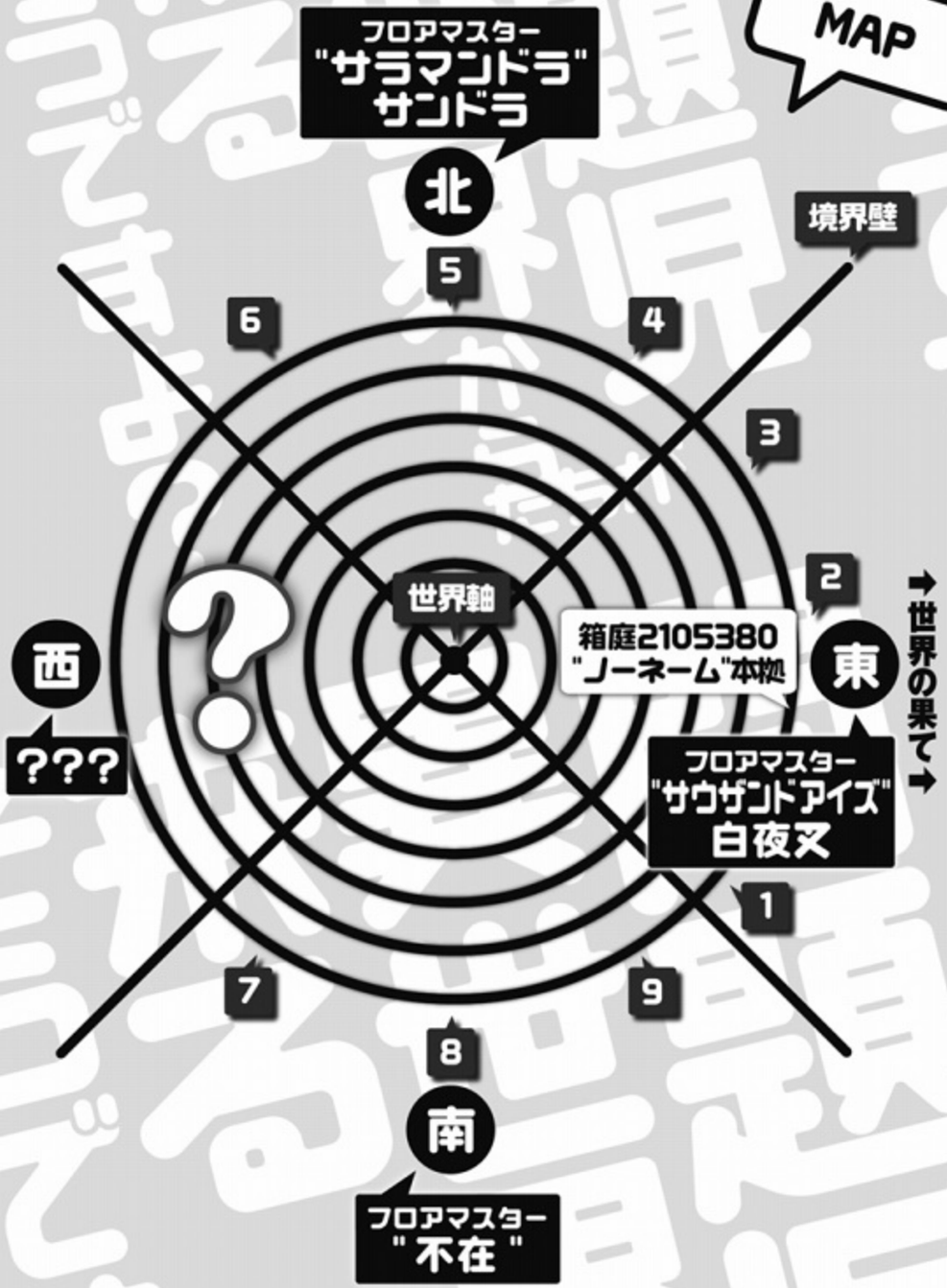
角川スニーカー文庫

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？
暴虐の三頭龍

終わりだ、新しい時代の申し子よ。
貴様では――
この〝悪〟の御旗は
砕けないッ!!!
逆噴十六夜
アジ＝ダカーハ

カナリア
金糸雀
さかまき
逆巻
いざよい
十六夜
……なんだよ。
お前が見たいって言うから、
裏口まで使って
無理やり入学したんだぞ。

MAP



Character

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？

暴虐の三頭龍

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舞台裏
次回予告!!
YES!
お前ら……
死ぬなよ
そっちのセリフだ!!!

Prologue

Part 1

Sunny spring, the season where blooming flowers exude a sweet aroma.

Gazing outside the window from the hospital ward, were cherry blossoms that signified the arrival of a new season. The spring breeze masked the smell of medicine in the ward, replacing it with the fragrance of flowers.

Lying on the hospital bed was a very bored lady—Canaria. She fretfully watched the spring blossom while complaining.

"How boring!"

"Hold back then. And start acting like a patient, Canaria."

The man standing beside her shook his head while muttering 'Yare yare'. Wearing a bowler hat, accompanied with a tuxedo, the man held up his hat with his right hand while sighing.

With indecency, Canaria placed her elbow on the supporting table, glancing at the parent-child that were walking on the boulevard.

"But Croix, even if you say that, I am still a patient.....for real. The huge amount of spirit power lost has caused my body to reach its limit. No matter what you do, I won't be saved."

Not pessimistic, just lightly speaking out her condition . The bowler hat man— "Baron The Cross(Baron Le Croix)" lowered his line of sight and become silent upon catching that.

This silence was an affirmation to what Canaria had said.

However, the words she had said were not ironic in any way.

While Canaria viewed the parent-child on the boulevard, she spoke to herself in a deep trance.

"It's already almost March. In previous years, this would be the time to welcome new kids into the Canaria Family Home eh? The party host was supposed to be me, allowing everyone to enjoy. How unsatisfactory ah."

"That also depends on you. Despite the loss of your spirit power, you could still live an ordinary life for about 4 to 5 years. But you should concentrate on your physical conditions first. Alright?"

I know, Canaria answered sulkingly.

—It was about 2 months since Canaria had been sick. For her to suddenly fall ill even though she was always healthy, it sent the Canaria Family Home to a state of chaos. Overall, the only person that maintained the house had fallen sick. Needless to say, her facilities staff and friends including Izayoi, changed their expressions and warned her in unison.

Be quiet and get hospitalized.

"But. Isn't that a tad bit rude to the mother of the facility? What a [Ghost turmoil]. Thinking back to how much ghost I had uniformed in the past. It can't be counted even with Buddha's hands."

".....Canaria. Doesn't Buddha only have 5 fingers?"

"Baka. Of course I am referring to his thousand hands."

'Heh', crossing her hands and snorting. The one being vented on should not be there, as it was an extremely difficult task to try and appease Canaria.

Swiftly giving up, the bowler hat man sat on the chair meant for nurses.

"Really.....I can't say anything since I wasn't present, but if you fell down without warning, I would be shaken up too. Such a buffoonery scene unimaginable back then in Little Garden."

"Well likewise you didn't rely on humans and therefore wasn't able to hold up your spirit power. And to think in the past, you abducted so many young girls from communities to create a large harem, Mr.[Baron The Cross]—The "Tuxedo Maou" to be such an example of a failure, so laughable."

"Haha, indeed.— but Canaria. For the sake of my reputation, please let me correct it a little."

Taking off his bowler hat while adjusting his Tuxedo. He widened his eyes,

"I didn't create a harem of young girls! But also created a harem of young girls!!!"

"Oh, is that so. Good, go die."

"Age difference and Eros does not matter! I dote and love newborn baby girls who usher into their first period of growth with their slightly undulating body and also like it when they usher into their second period of growth and become conscious of their sentimental girl's heart with their young body and I also like it when they grow up to be a ripe fruit with their delicate body which can grow into an extremely hot person to have downright forbidden love, OH EROS!!"

"Really eh? Go and die quickly. I won't ask you to have a painful death. But as long as you go die."

"I live without shame!!! Eros for the world!!! Philanthropy Hooray!!"

".....But, Loli is your favorite right?"

"I don't deny that!!!"

Part 2

Accepting what was said to be the most indescribable performance (Violence) of [Baron the Cross], he finished adjusting his tie and sat down on a chair.

"Sorry for the rudeness. I seemed to have slightly released some spirit power."

"Although I tried to imagine what your current character was like. But you are really hopeless, with that kind of tone."

"Can't help it. The loss of spirit power generally relies on the impact of personality. I have no interest in this sort of people, but it's important to develop excellence for other generations."

He shrugged his shoulders. By the time she noticed that, his clothes had already been readjusted to the rightful position.

Sighing wearily, Canaria laid down on her bed and gazed at the cherry blossoms.

Following that, a self-deprecating smile appeared on her lips.

"Well.....this accords to a dead end for the remnants of a routed army eh? It's the same for both of us."

Viewing outside the window absentmindedly, she muttered strengthlessly. It was a rare sight to see Canaria look that weak.

The man who was swinging his bowler hat, used rebuking eyes to stare sharply at Canaria.

"Ha.....what anger are you venting for? Don't we still have the ultimate weapon? The ultimate weapon called Sakamaki Izayoi. To this end we have prepared in the outside world for hundred of years? Those were your instructions. However, you still want to give up the fight, Canaria."

"I understand that. I can't just abandon Kuro Usagi and the others.....But, Croix. The community's fight is our fight, not little Izayoi's fight."

".....So?"

The back of [Baron the Cross] monolithic glasses started emitting out a dangerous glint. Even though his spirit power had slumped, his eyes that belonged to death god could still see through people's heart. Feeling condemn from Canaria, he immediately corrected his posture and faced her.

"Sakamaki Izayoi — The trump card of us " " who was flown into tens of millions of history. I'm afraid he is the strongest Candidate of Origin. Even if it's not completed yet, he is no lesser than the might of holy sister. I am sure he certainly could stop the ambitions of those guys."

"Then,"

"But, Croix. We lost. Thoroughly and uncomplainingly , furthermore, in an upright manner. To continue interfering with Little Garden, don't you think it seems twisted?"

Canaria opened her eyelids and spread open her arms. [Baron the Cross] got worried that her life was maybe approaching its end and became perfunctory, quieting listening to her,

"Of course, revenge filled our hearts when we were exiled out of Little Garden. Something like [How could our dreams end in that kind of form!] .But isn't it deviating from the target if we just let him help us wipe our butts.....when I noticed that, I suddenly thought, our fight—was already over."

Staring at the ceiling while immersed in her memories. The escaping and fighting days were behind them already. Too far away. Water that scattered from their hands were no longer retrievable. Precisely because they did not understand this point— they had fragmented an ordinary family.

—Sakamaki Izayoi did not know.

He wasn't abandoned by his parents.

Because of their failure, they obtained a nameless baby with a powerful gift, tortured by the conflict of this world, forced to bear the fact that he was a monster destined to live a lonely life.

Or perhaps he would—have willingly accepted the commonplace happiness. But that possibility was forcefully taken away by Canaria.

He who was swinging the bowler hat, also felt guilty towards this point.

But in order to nip at this remorse, he asked Canaria.

".....So, do we continue to reel him in? Or is that your atonement?"

If there was a misconception, it must be corrected. He condemned with a strong determination.

If they really wanted to reel him in, the decision should've been made 15 years ago. But now, the only person who could deliver these kind of discouraging words, would be Canaria. Hearing the confession from his foster mother of what happened 15 years ago, would only add more emotional damage to him.

Understanding this point, Canaria turned her head around and gave a troubled smile in denial.

"Fufun, no. Sorry, but please say something nicer. That kind of statement is too mean. It sounds like an excuse."

"Then why?"

Leaning forward his body while asking again.

Canaria gaze outside the window while giving out a vexing laugh.

"Why.....eh. Really, I wonder why? I'm not so sure myself. Adopting so many children, yet only pouring so many feelings into just one. But now, I feel pure uneasiness for that child's future. Stay in the outside world or head off to Little Garden.....what kind of adult would little Izayoi grow into, even I'm really concerned about that."

What a pain, Canaria shrugged her shoulders to express irony for herself.

However, Canaria knew where these feelings came from.

A whole decade—Canaria had been giving everything to Izayoi.

Knowledge, lifestyle, as well as loving people.

All her property she had obtained in Little Garden were generously given to him, in which Izayoi responded by absorbing it. It was more of a parent-child relationship rather than a master-disciple relationship.

".....Can't bear to watch. Becoming so anxious just ' cause my death is coming. I have been under the tutelage of many deities before.....they send me off with this kind of uneasy feeling too."

"Un, I agree on with you regarding this point. Your mediocrity, no matter if it's me, holy sister, Indra, Queen, Orpheus, or the others, we have~~all worked hard. Hoping that you will express gratitude to us for being mentors that did not give up on you."

"Gu.....it was, that, I can't deny it."

Canaria pouted her cheeks and slightly blushed.

Probably remembering her immaturity back then and feeling ashamed.

'Cough', deliberately coughing while simultaneously glancing at him.

"Ah, but occasionally I can't help but think about when little Izayoi learns the truth.....those happy days, wouldn't it turn into his curse? His heart that was nurtured to be honest would become distorted. I'm—very afraid."

Then don't tell him the truth, living in the outside world quietly was certainly a method. In this world, some facts are better left unknown.

However, Little Garden had all that he ever desired. That wasn't wrong. But at the same time, it would expose the origin of Sakimaki Izayoi.

"Damn, I'm angry at my own wayward indulgence. Standing motionless at the same spot. What should I do, what I think I must do.....I can't find the answer."

".....Canaria."

Repeating questions that had no answers. This was a situation where Canaria had no experience in.

[Baron the Cross] gave a look as if watching a master, feeling ashamed for his immaturity in his heart.

He was the god of sexuality as well as eulogized as the god of death, but still did not understand the unease of his long-standing partner. Canaria was like a daughter to him. As for her sense of duty towards the children, she abandoned everything, which made him feel the irony of fate. Just when he was confused as to what he should say—suddenly, a small figure came in through the window along with the spring breeze.

".....How in the? I was desperately searching for friends, and you actually became so fragile? What kind of expression should I use?"

Both of them threw a look at the window. Walking inside from the cherry tree's branch with a 'Datok datok', was a short girl that wore a red dress— [Little devil of Laplace] gazed at them in surprise.

Due to the astonishment, the expression on [Baron the Cross] changed and he shook his head while inhaling deeply.

"Lapp!? Impossible, why are you in the outside world!? You can't keep your spirit power if you are in denial with the era of the Laplace theory right!?"

"The times have changed. It was confirmed to exist in the early 2000s "Paradigm shift". Because of this impact, it is expected that the [Laplace's demon] can complete the morphological changes within 200 years.—Compared to that,"

'Datok datok', she walked into Canaria's room while traversing through air. Striding to Canaria, whose knee was covered, Lapp sadly lifted her head to look at her,

"......It's been too long, Canaria."

"It has been, Lapp. And you are still looking so cute and petite. Want some pear?"

"If you don't mind."

An immediate answer came from Canaria's cheerful proposal.

Slicing it to palm size—Lapp, who was as large as a pear, with a 'Shagu shagu shagu', devoured the pear in one go. While thinking that this behavior was [Always lovely], Canaria smiled.

Wiping the area around her mouth clean, Lapp once again faced towards Canaria.

"Your spirit power loss is very intense. The spirit power of your kind wouldn't attenuate even if hundred of years past.....what an extollment. Changing the world's poem."

"Yes. Because that's the job of poet."

Listening to Lapp's investigative yet sharp voice, a perplexed smile appeared from Canaria.

Knowing what would happen, she painfully lowered her head and bit her lip.

—Little Garden's [Poet], doesn't mean a minstrel.

But referred to the "Giant race", "Magica" this kind of name given to human imaginative monsters. Although it was not a strong race, their poet is feared to have the fourth strongest kind of special strength. That means being able to alter the rules of a "Hoster rights" game.—called the game remaker, a unique gift.

Since ancient times, the poet's singing could allow people to convey history. Sometimes he sang, sometimes a book, using all kind of various ways to record merits in this world, giving the time period such intangible form.

According to the era, the poet had an influence stronger than the king of a country.

With his strong influence, the poet would fabricate false exploits to spread the notoriety of the king, even distorting true history using his singing was possible.

In the place where all time flows into Little Garden, the poet has it's advantages. The poet of Little Garden could easily tamper with history.

The poet with an enormous influence power, could even make his own God group.

"Holy sister who created the scripture belongs to the Poet in a broad sense. The poet can interfere with the politics and conflicts in the outside world "Paradigm shift ", and expand it's godly population size. —but Canaria. You used your own spirit power to cause a shift in the outside world right?"

"Yes. But as to how it's done, it's a business secret.....
...Only, there is a problem. I can't be the center of the God's group. So I can't have divinity now, which means that my time here is running out."

"Wu, what happened.....!? Why didn't you look for another way back to Little Garden!?"

"Because I'm convinced that it is useless. We can't stop those guys in our current state."

"But! Without your word, which direction should the alliance, our dream, head into! It was you who incited us to build an alliance right!? Isn't that so!?"

Facing the beratement of Lapp, Canaria quietly shook her head and responded.

Her petite body trembling, she criticized Canaria with a sound that was mingled with both sorrow and anger.

Many communities participated in the alliance established by Canaria. The alliance was firmly united thanks to the power and virtue of Canaria.

If they lost her, the alliance might be forced to dissolve . Never expecting to be betrayed by a companion after going through untold hardships in the infinite and wide world, Lapp couldn't help but severely reprimand her.

After [Baron the Cross](Baron la Croix) finished hearing all this quietly, he held the rim of the bowler head and intervened between both of them.

"Lapp. Stop denouncing her. To fight against those guys—[Ouroboros], you'll need the Candidate of Origin."

"…….? Candidate of Origin?"

"Yes. And I'm sure he will be eligible to inherit us. I'm not referring to his power, but his soul."

Even though it was concluded like this, Canaria's face still did not light up.

Closing her sad eyes that were gazing at the cherry trees by the road.

"But……I don't want to impose my ideals on him. The one who messed up the child's life, was no one else but me. So at least let him decide his future. Whether he steadily lives his life in the outside world—or shoulder our dreams and the future of " "."

Finishing her sentence, Canaria recalled something and leaked out a bitter smile.

"......Ah. No, in this case. Even if he is summoned to Little Garden, there are still other options for little Izayoi to choose. I have completely forgotten about it."

'So silly', surprising herself and laughing.

Aware of the possibility that might reduce the burden on her shoulders, Canaria finally used her usual mischievous smile and shrugged.

"Well, despite all the depressing sort of things brought up, talking about my death would still be a bit to early. Little Izayoi he—is. It should not be a problem to stay alive until he turns into an adult."

"........Ahhhh. You will die in less than 5 years."

"Is it really okay? You already had stopped yearning for your own life?"

"That is impossible. How long do you think I have been living? In order to not regret today, I might scamper with all my strength. Oh! If things that are not done—"

How could I. Was about to say that, but his mouth unnaturally stopped.

Canaria's line of sight was fixated on a student strolling on the cherry blossom tree trail.

For the sentimental students who were going to their school for the new term, Canaria carried a troubled smile .

".....Yes. If I knew that I had such feelings, I should of acted as family more thoroughly. I was obviously going to get through life without remorse, but regrets would be still be left behind."

"....."

However, such a request was too luxurious.

She could not satisfy herself and make it up for the act of binding Sakamaki Izayoi for three years.

A person's life is like a fleeting moment. Don't waste the short and limited time one has on undesirable social systems. Moreover, the form of beauty that fake parent-child relationship has was to push this kind of wayward reason on others, which only helps in self-gratification.

With a seemingly heavy atmosphere surrounding the ward—

A trio of crisp sounds suddenly appeared from the hospital corridor.

"Over here over here! Iza-nii, hurry!"

"I got it. Suzuka, don't make so much noise in the hospital. And Homura, stop playing the game while walking."

"Just, just a little bit more. Just 2 more rounds to defeat the Maou Soma....."

Lively running in the corridor with a 'Pata pata!' was a brown-colored young girl, Irori Suzuka.

And the boy who absolutely refused to let go of the gameboy, Homura.

Monitoring the two youngsters was a teen—Sakamaki Izayoi, who slowly walked towards the ward.

"Gu, Lapp. Come here."

In one way or another, [Baron the Cross] and Lapp disappeared in a flash.

As if nothing had happened, Canaria sat in an upright posture and waited for the trio. Sounding something like a muffled knock, she responded with her usual tone.

"Please enter. The door's unlocked."

"Okay~.—Hey, come in too Iza-nii!"

"..... I know I know. Please enter first."

"Don't kink it. Precisely because we want to show off Iza-nii's splendid attire, we came here, so you enter first."

The trio outside the door were noisy. This scene was quite rare. Only the innocent Suzuka's frolicking was deemed as normal.

It was rare to see Izayoi being hesitant. Which ignited the naughty heart of Canaria, who then quietly got down from the bed and went to the door, with full momentum, the hospital door—

Part 3

"—Ah?"

Thump.

Opening the door, the surprised Canaria was at a loss for words.

Both Suzuka and Homura swallowed their breath.

Izayoi was putting on an expression as if to mask his dissatisfaction, before staring at Canaria and embarrassingly scratching his head.

".....Yo. You look well."

Stiffly raising his right hand to say hello. The usual hateful smile was not there. Izayoi currently had a delicate expression as if he was discovered to be cheating .

Canaria stood with her mouth wide open, and Izayoi with an expression as if to mask his dissatisfaction.

Both of them who were difficult to get along with, undisguisingly face the silence. Those that knew both of them would probably wonder what had happened.

That was of course natural, Izayoi was dressed up with something different than his usual wear.

Glancing up and down Izayoi's body for three times, Canaria unbelievably asked.

".....Little Izayoi? What happened, those clothes? It looks like a uniform for students."

"It's not like a students uniform. It is as you see, a student's uniform"

'Heh', Izayoi grunted with little self-esteem.

Dark blue suit with a loosely tied tie. It was the uniform of the school built close to the Canaria Family House. And Izayoi would not pointlessly put on those clothes.

Getting increasingly surprised, Canaria widened her mouth and speechlessly looked at Izayoi.

.....A rare sight to see Canaria being that slow.

With Izayoi slowly becoming angry, he scratched his head while embarrassingly said.

".....What? Ah, it was you who wanted to see, so I was forcibly enrolled into school. Be more happy please, Canaria."

"—,"

This extremely awkward tenderness made Canaria aware of the situation.

Sakamaki Izayoi—only because of Canaria's wish, entered into high school.

When Canaria fell down.....confiding those discouraging words, he sincerely picked things up.

Due to the unexpected events that shocked Canaria, she could not help but lower her head with watery eyes. In her long term career, this was the first time she got hit with an impact of this degree.

Using her right hand to scratch her blonde hair, Canaria sent out an unusual and great voice.

".....Good. Ahhhh it really is good! My children are just too cute! Even if I am defamed as a foolish mother, I will accept it! The children of Canaria Family House are definitely the most cutest in this world!!!!!"

Canaria suddenly embraced the three of them

In order to not show an emotional mood, Canaria forcibly picked up the three. Otherwise she wouldn't be able to keep up the majesty of an adoptive mother.

Being swung around while being hugged, Izayoi sighed.

"Much more exaggerated than usual. Please be more honest as a patient."

"I don't wanna. Because you are too cute. Izayoi is good Homura is good Suzuka is good everyone is cute. I will always love you all. As long as I can still blink, I will not allow anyone of you to be married or be a son-in-law! "

Yes yes, the only thing he could do was be surprised and turn his head away.

But at the time, Suzuka and Homura who were also being swung around left from Canaria in a panic. Looking at the clock in the ward, they pulled Izayoi's sleeves and cried out.

"Aiyah, there is no more time to do this kind of things Iza-nii! You are going to be late for the entrance ceremony!"

"Suzuka, we are the ones with the entrance ceremony... .....also, it's about time for Iza-nii to get going too."

"Got it. So in this way, please go sleep like an ordinary patient would do."

Ending the conversation, he pulled away from Canaria .

Canaria was forcibly suppressing the urge to follow them to the entrance ceremony when the trio left the ward. Just when the door was opened, Izayoi suddenly turned towards Canaria and asked with a wonderful expression.

"..... Body, are you really fine?"

"Un. It's as you saw, very healthy."

"Is that so? Then hurry and get back. Without you, the House is getting stalled. All the workers are busy due to the unaccustomed work they have to do."

"Ara, It really is an ugly sight. It's not good if it became like this in just one month. When I'm discharged, there will be a need to discuss the problem of staff re-education."

Crossing her arms, fighting sarcasm with sarcasm.

Usually they would both smile at each other when parting. The beautiful communication style between the both of them.

But Izayoi was clearly different today. He kept staring at Canaria's strange expression, and carefully considering his choice of words, along with sharp eyes,

"—What happened?"

Asserted.

His tone and eyes did not allow any denial or confirmation. Convinced that he had seen through Canaria. His eyes looked like it contained a creepy light.

But Canaria did not appear to be afraid, and easily took over without any discoloration.

"Okay, I have lots of things concealed but I don't know what you are talking about. Although I am not a lying doctrine, but the amount of concealed things I have could pile up like a mountain.....Huhu. If you want to expose my secret, you need to try harder."

With the index finger placed against her lips, she shook her head while exposing a fearless smile. That kind of tolerant smile really could not be imagined to have come from a patient. Not feeling uneasy all. Her iron wall smile did not allow any discussions.

Smiling to hide her head. Although this was one of her basic tactics, the effect was no better than a good poker face. Izayoi had never let that smile collapse either. And the usual Izayoi would immediately give up, leaving without giving a care.

However, only today did Izayoi not retreat.

Maintaining the silence while looking into her eyes, words that were weaved out scattered from his mouth.

".....I, I'm very happy."

".....?"

Hearing the sudden words, she tilted her head. Izayoi carefully choose his next words while continuing to gaze at Canaria in the eye.

A hint of sadness emerged from the depths of the eyes.

"I'm glad that I could meet you. If I hadn't encountered Canaria, I would definitely encroach to do some silly things, find the world to be boring, and become a boring man. .....Before I encountered you, I had always been thinking like that."

Facing forward, stepped out halfway.

Eyes were extremely calm.

The receiving side which was Canaria, didn't have any smile on.

"It was satisfying to learn about new knowledge, even when treading on the road, it was all because you had taught me. So I was happy I could meet someone like you. Even if that encounter—**With some other kind of attempt**. I believe that my encounter with Canaria was inevitable."

Not hiding any hypocrisy.

With a tone filled with quiet honesty, Izayoi declared.

"....."

There was no need for words.

Izayoi, he did not know anything.

Aside from the strength he has, he did not know the reason why it lodged into his body, or the things about Little Garden which was of a different world. Only hugging the loneliness when young, not knowing the names of his family that departed, even if it was a conspiracy set by Canaria—It did not matter— the boy said so.

No matter what kind of intent or ambition, the memories since that day wouldn't fade no matter what.

To Sakamaki Izayoi, it was fate that he encountered Canaria, his quiet eyes telling so.

"....., Idiot. This tenderness, leave it to someone whom you would meet in the future."

Finally spitting out such a sentence, she turned her body away. Unable to disclose any more things. To tell the truth, saying out the motives of Canaria and others, was still not allowed yet.

But Canaria had an intuition.

Izayoi also vaguely sensed it.

Both of them decided that the time to part was close.

Being unable to say it out loud, they were surrounded by a heavy silence.

Confirming the time with his inadvertently distinguished eyes, Izayoi back-faced the ward.

"For a certain someone.....eh? I feel that I won't have that kind of meeting in the future."

"There will bound to be a meeting. Only when you save people with your gentleness and nobility.....the person you are fated to meet, will definitely be waiting for you."

Firmly telling it to the figure. She could only guarantee this point.

Henceforth, Izayoi would save countless of people. Beating down countless of enemies. Regardless of the world, sometimes in the social war, sometimes in military warfare, across various kind of difficulties.

Unable to witness all of this, a tinge of loneliness was felt.

But for the arrival of that day, Canaria words weaved.

"Only the people you can save. Only the enemies you can beat. With your courage and challenge, that day will come. .....You don't have to believe it now. But relying on you, the companions who will rely on you will definitely appear."

Telling the figure with an urgent voice.

The maximum of things Canaria can tell him.

Remaining silent for a while, Izayoi soon returned back to his smile.

"Ha, that's good. I also want to try and rely on someone else."

Intertwining his usual smile and a wry smile. With his heart determining [How would such a thing happen], Izayoi left the ward. Canaria leaned against the window, watched the figure leave while tightly gripping her hand. Pulling Homura and Suzuka, Izayoi resembled a student no matter how you look at it.

Sending him off with her posture, she whispered in the empty ward.

"Bon Voyage. I hope you have a wonderful student life ."

Watching the figure of the trio leave. If she was a real parent—she would immediately dismiss those sudden things said. She told herself that only this point was definitely not desirable.

Being cheery again, Canaria corrected her posture and said.

"Lapp. Croix. Still there?"

"What?"

The spring breeze caused the curtain to sway. [Baron the Cross] and [Laplace little devil] appeared from the fabric.

Both of them carried complex expressions and gazed at Canaria. Even when his age exceeds both, it was his first time he had seen a shaken Canaria. Never expected the teenager to digress the encounter a few years back. It was quite miserable to both of them who were intimate.

Raising her head, Canaria asked both of them

"When I'm dead.....that child, can I leave him to the both of you?"

""I refuse""

"Oi."

Hearing the cold response from her favorite comrades, Canaria could not help but let out a 'Oi'. Both of them ignored it and crossed their arms.

"No matter what you say, it can't be done. Flatly refused. Even if our relationship is all of soulmate and best friend, there are things that can be easily promised and things that cannot be easily promised."

"Totally agree. I won't let you compromise this. It is also the master-slave etiquette. If you think we will willingly accept your promise, you are wrong."

"..... You described it like this, but it is jealousy isn't it?"

""We won't deny that either.""

Both of them make a fist with their hands.

Canaria stifled a laughter while scratching her head with her right hand.

".....Thanks. But this is my last request. So please help me."

Canaria gave a troubled laugh. The statement she said, was literally like the dying words of someone. From the

start, the duo did not intend to ignore, but they still felt like arguing.

Sighing deeply, both of them faced Canaria and forcibly nodded.

"Can't help it. This is a disciple's wish for the mentor. Till the last minute, the god of death shall be responsible for this."

"We have sworn over the Laplace's oath, Canaria. But it's only for you. I am extremely pleased to help your request. .....However."

Suddenly, Lapp's eyes started glowing. Looking outside the window, she was befitted to be the observation devil and also Secretary in charge, always consistent with knowledge, even her body does not match with her cunning.

Gazing at Izayoi from afar, she asked with a tone filled with anxiousness and vigilance.

"He.....**Who is he'**?"

"Unfortunately that is all. My clairvoyance can't capture the real image of that human. It was the same as

just now, I can't grasp his existence even with the naked eye. Not even found even with a large stack of devil books.....what an unusual situation."

Bite bite, Lapp puckered and bit down on a few pears. She was the Secretary and an omniscient demon. It was something that she who knew all didn't know.

In contrast, Canaria looked like she had received good news and revealed a bright expression.

"Really.....Fufu. If even Lapp says so, then the first phase has been completed."

Crossing her arms, a mischievous smile came out. Because Lapp wanted to know what he was, she anticipated the answer with her dress shaking.

"He is a [Code Unknown].....No, if you insist on giving him a name—"

'Pata!' Canaria opened all the windows.

Suddenly, a gust of wind came in.

The spring breeze blew on the white curtains and cherry petals flew unto the bed. Enjoying this breeze,

with her blond hair loose, Canaria let her thoughts materialize into words.

"——[Last future of Embryo]——Just like that, his call ♪"

Chapter 1

Part 1

The top of the volcano peak, unmarked [Geass roll] rained down from the skies.

No markings for any trial synopsis.

No names to specify the participants.

Even the hoster's declaration was not on it.

The only thing recorded on the parchment was the flag of [悪].

Geass rolls were not issued by anybody, nor written by someone.

To spread around the contracts in this world, those trivial things were unnecessary.

Those contracts had been in existence since the day the world split. Eliminating the need to record any synopsis for the trials. Residents of this world had always been aware of these details.

—From the active volcano, hot wind blew out.

Emerging from the cauldron of hell, the high-ranking Maou who "will not live under the same sky with one's enemy".

Thou, prayed to be a monster who "turned to evil", the three pair of ruby eyes shined, accompanying the resonating bell, the battle began.

『Give your all, It's been hundreds of years, hero !!!!

Exhaust all your strength!!!

Muster all your resourcefulness!!!

Show me your reckless courage— become a glorious sword that will pierce my heart!!!』

" !? "

The death scythe passed by where his head had been a few millimeters away.

It was a miracle that Sakamaki Izayoi was able to avoid that, or maybe it was just his character that was usually accumulated. The pure white ferocious nails

contained an immense destructive power to kill that Izayoi could even feel it with the naked eye. The remainder of the nails instantly blew away the wreckage of the palace, cutting into the ground.

After being cut, the cracked earth lamented, creating a cliff that can give anyone an illusion that it would lead to hell. Lava poured out of the peak and filled the cracks. It was even suitable to call the currently boiling surface the kiln of hell.

(*Damn, this is not the time to be seeing revolving lanterns*[11].)

Izayoi motivated himself. The death match had officially begun.

Izayoi used the backlash to gain some distance. Using a posture to jump strenuously, the results were that his abdomen had started bleeding and blood swarmed to his throat.

Kneeling on the ground while gazing upwards at the three-headed dragon and Demon Lord, Izayoi swallowed his breath and blood back while looking at the bone chilling figure.

(*Demon Lord Azi=Dahaka.....this is truly the strongest species.....!!!*)

Strongly holding onto his disabled hand, he trembled in the presence of the enemy's strength. If it was what Izayoi had theorized, this enemy is truly a [Demon Lord] that rivaled gods.

—[Zoroastrianism (Zoroastrian)]. To make clear of the Magianism reasoning, having a specific cosmology group faction for gods. A [Demon Lord] in the position of the Hebrew's old testament and Buddhism, but the spirit power this three-headed dragon had was in an even higher level than the two specified.

What the latter said was that the [Demon Lord] prepared a position to have hostility against gods. Therefore, its will and fundamental purpose was malicious. A significant example would be the opposition between gods and devils in The Bible. The essence of the opposition between Gods and Devils were anti-institutional, the viciousness that both humans and social evil possess.

However, for the [Zoroastrianism] Demon Lord, it being evil did not stem from its purpose.

The maliciousness and sense of purpose, became different from the latter Maou's decision.

This three-headed dragon that was a [Zoroastrianism] Demon Lord,— **the evil was born because it was his desire**, volatilizing to be a tyrant Demon Lord.

(*Completely in a different league with Pest, Saurian Demon King and the Demon Lords Alliance. The purpose of his existence did not degenerate into a Demon Lord. Because he didn't commit any sins—this guy, will dominate as a Demon Lord.....!!!*)

Three pairs of eyes, six pupil that flashed with a ferocity radiance. In a retrospect, Izayoi had never tried fighting with the strongest species before.

The star-class Algol was enslaved in an incomplete form.

The Giant dragon that fell into a runaway possessed no intellect.

For Sakamaki Izayoi, this was his first time having a deathmatch with one of the strongest species.

(*What to do!? How to fight!? My right hand is completely unusable and my left hand will only suffer the same fate if I punch him.....*)

Battling with the Highness, his body was in a death frequency. Not just his right hand, his upper and lower body kept screaming. Izayoi continued to bleed while thinking at the fastest speed of the ace strategy for victory.

But the enemy would not give him that kind of time.

Running through the pile of wreckage, the three-headed dragon made a creaking sound. Catching Izayoi with his ruby red eyes, he spread his wings and ascended to the skies.

"—
GYEEEEEEEEEEYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
!!!"

The cry even repelled back the approaching lava wave.

Currently facing no possibility for any chance of winning. Izayoi felt mortified, but he still went the opposite direction where Amalthea was running away from the three-headed dragon.

"Stop looking down on humans.....Lizard!"

His leg muscles that wouldn't admit defeat, he ran in a straight line heading for the volcano peak.

With his footing that seemed to be sinking into the sea of lava for every jumps, he pulled the distance away from the three-headed dragon. This was the best strategy to win, but the three-headed dragon gave a sly smile and snorted.

—Tearing him, the three-headed dragon raised it's right hand and ordered.

In a moment, an unbearable pain came from behind Izayoi. It was a feeling as if a sharp knife slashed him from his shoulder down to his waist.

"Gaa.....!?"

What had happened, it was definitely not a cognitive blow.

Looking back, the three-headed dragon was still in the wreckage of the palace. A considerate distance away from Izayoi who was sprinting towards the volcano peak . If it was the ferocious claws from before, there should've been traces of it on the ground, but there were none.

And the injury behind was not shallow. Even the battle-weary Izayoi could not help but keel over, sweating profusely while staring at the three-headed dragon.

(*What.....kind of gift was used.....!?*)

Cross-referencing with the legends related to Azi= Dahaka in his mind. But it could not be identified.

The legend was about a Maou who performed thousand kinds of magic, but there was no detailed records of it in books. Even the knowledgeable Izayoi could not do anything to something that wasn't recorded.

Nevertheless, in order to obtain the only intelligence, Izayoi forcibly pressed down on his wounded shoulders.

The wound and the laceration caused by the slash resembled each other. Momentarily chasing off [Something] from the slashing incident into the corner of his mind, Izayoi generally stood up.

『……

The three-headed dragon pointed at emptiness, before making horizontal strokes.

Suddenly, the wings that stood behind the three-headed dragon's back started to change shape. Or it may not be a wing from the very start. Freely changing the shape of the black edge. Izayoi perceived the true colors behind the slash while trembling.

(*The dragon shadow similar to Leticia's.....! ! This is the true face behind that slash!*)

But comparing with the speed and accuracy of the dragon shadow Izayoi was familiar with, it was completely different.

Just when Izayoi was aware of the shadow blade, it was already closing in to his eyes. Although Izayoi reflexively dodged backwards , he still could not avoid the blade rubbing his cheek.

Second, third, relentlessly chasing after Izayoi, trying to snipe him off.

Like scattering rain, the blade attacked like a storm. With every hit bearing the power for an instant kill. If a dodge was made a few milliseconds later, decapitation would surely happen.

Flogging his heavily injured body, constantly rolling on the ground to escape.

The earth heated by the lava looked as red as a melting iron. Even when he kept receiving minor burns and wounds with the constant tumbling, Izayoi's eyes remain unyielding.

『……Tsk.

Accepting the unyielding gaze, the three-headed dragon snorted. And twisting its long neck, with the three pairs of eyes locked on Izayoi, the three-headed dragon quickly drew closer.

With a burly body twice the size of Izayoi, yet he used speed superior to Izayoi's to close up the distance.

"......!?"

The burly body suddenly appeared from somewhere out of his perception. Even though Izayoi was mortally wounded, the opponent was undeniably faster than him.

(*Damn.....this really sucks.....!*)

He knew that it was strong. But Izayoi did not think that the power of its strength was actually this huge.

Overlooking Izayoi with its eyes of ruby, as if confirming the situation, the three-headed dragon muttered.

『……Yes. Before the fight with me, your body was already approaching death. If you were not injured, you could have been able to escape.

"Wha, what are you saying....!!!"

Commiseration was included in its voice. Those words said by the three-headed dragon was full of pity. But instantly understanding the true meaning of his words, Izayoi gritted his teeth in humiliation.

—If you were not injured, you could have been able to escape.

That is—**not being able to match even at his full potential**— meaning

From the start, the three-headed dragon never doubted his victory, the thought of losing never crossed his mind. That was the arrogance that Izayoi had carried when he arrived in Little Garden, always feeling pity for his surroundings.

The strong will inherently be the strong. So the weak will always be helpless.

Such similar values and philosophy, but now the Maou was severely trampling him underfoot.

(*Ha.....so that's how it is. This really, pisses me off.....!!!*)

Due to mortification, Izayoi was trembling. Unable to bear the anger that he had never experienced before in his 17 years, he abruptly stood up, forgetting the pain in his wounds.

His life full of sympathy, of lacking in compassion. Never expecting that he would be on the verge of dying for once.

With the negative feeling that he had never felt before, Izayoi smiled while holding onto his broken right hand.

"Thanks for the mercy.....so as thanks, I think I can still struggle a while more....!!!"

Mustering all his strength to stand up, he used unbending eyes to stare into those ruby eyes.

However, this was his last resistance.

The blood seeping out from his flanks and back had already forced him to be in the realm of unconsciousness.

Letting Izayoi stand up, with a fighting spirit that would not yield.

The three-headed dragon along with its three pairs of ruby eyes, gazed at Izayoi—suddenly, a malicious smile appeared from its mouth.

『I see. Your fighting spirit, is commendable. It seems as if violence can't subdue you— so, how do you feel about this despair?

Raising its white claws, the three-headed dragon dug the claws into its shoulders.

Huge amount of blood started gushing out, dyeing the upper body of the three-headed dragon red. The blood trickled unto the ground, before it started to move suspiciously as if gaining life.

The earth, lava, deadwood started to change shape to be a two-headed dragon after bathing in Azi=Dahaka's blood.

Witnessing this move, Izayoi started to feel anxious on top of trembling. That sight was too abnormal for anyone . Devouring the earth, two-headed dragons started to appear— all of them, exuded a sense of coercion that rivaled gods.

(*This guys.....avatar of the Divine Class!? The one that Shiroyasha defeated!*)

When [No Name] and [Underwood] was fighting, 5 dragons attacked the eastern district. Izayoi was told that they were the subs of Azi=Dahaka's body.

After obtaining the characteristics of ferrite, the two-headed dragons emitted out an even more ominous gesture.

The right head of the three-headed dragon, issued an order.

『A goat, two females fled. Go kill them.

"What!?"

Words that were unexpected, caused Izayoi to be on a defensive posture. However, Izayoi who was riddled with gaping wounds was unable to prevent the two-headed dragon from going. Like a fired arrow, three dragons flew down the mountain.

Blocking Izayoi who thought of chasing after them, the three-headed dragon displayed the flag behind his back and roared.

『Okay, what should you do, human? Gaining time would be meaningless now. Want to save your comrades , the only route is to destroy me.

"—Stop joking around, you ground lizard!!!"

Izayoi intolerably yelled. It was not the time to talk about the injuries already. Rising from the situation where he was heading towards death, Izayoi jumped towards the three-headed dragon.

Enduring the regurgitating blood from coming, he used his left hand to hit the giant's stomach. Punching faster than the one before, he didn't mind even if his fist broke.

Giving a blow that was equivalent to a double-edged sword, he self-mutilated to deliver a deep punch in to the huge body.

『……

A bitter voice slightly leaked out of the three-headed dragon.

However, Izayoi overrode the impact suffered from the reaction force.

Punching deeply into the abdomen, Izayoi found out that there was a secret hidden in the three-headed dragon's body.

(***How heavy****.....! Definitely, not a body mass a three meter body should have.....!!!!*)

Izayoi's fist could only generate a trace of movement.

Although it wasn't known what gift it had, but the three-headed dragon had the quality of a continent or something equivalent to a continent concentrated in his mere three meters of body. It was of course inevitable that his fist would be crushed.

Droplets of blood sprayed out from his broken fist. The generated severe pain, was suppressed with intense passion and male blood.

"Gaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

The indomitable fists that kept striking. Each time, accompanied by blood.

The atmosphere affected by the storm of hundreds of punches in under one second could be seen, even the lava waves were being overturned. Izayoi's foothold could not withstand the power of his might and started sinking in. Despite the onslaught of Izayoi's punches, the three-headed dragon only shook slightly.

Unable to determine the quality of the three-headed dragon, even Izayoi's fist which could destroy the stars did not stir the dragon up. The punches that were in the third cosmic speed kept hitting the belly of the three-headed dragon.

『Nuu.....!!!

One step, the three-headed dragon placed its right foot backwards.

Izayoi did not let go of this subtle body movement.

The target of the fists changed from the abdomen to the left head, after three punches, forcefully turn the neck down. Although it was unlikely to have toppled it, but going through untold successful balance disruption, overwhelming it at the right time.

Towards the sitting three-headed dragon, this was a final showdown to Izayoi.

(*Right now—if I miss this moment, I will never win.....!!!*)

The crushed right hand, put up an aurora.

Showing something to crush the dragon, the gift that can split the dead world.

With an aurora appearing on his right hand that could eliminate the stars in the night sky, turned into a huge pillar that reached up the sky.

Able to penetrate the sky in Little Garden, in front of the gift where the omniscient demon could only call it as a [Code Unknown], the eyes of the three-headed dragon started to shake because of the shock.

"—,!!?"

Wrong. Not only were the ruby eyes shaking.

With the three-headed dragon as the center, the earth and atmosphere vehemently rumbled. Only whirlpools started concentrating on the three-headed dragon's palms, producing a hot sphere.

『[Avesta][2] start—restriction in five elements, [Another Cosmology].....!!!』

Heat more intense than the mountain of flowing lava.

Standing in front of the heat that was enough to scorch his skin, Izayoi sucked in cool air.

(*What.....burning gift is that.....?*)

No matter how much destructive power, it was not to be feared. The [Aurora Pillar] in Izayoi's hands could not be defended by anything in this world.

As if pulling the handle of the light, Izayoi swung it down towards the three-headed dragon's heart.

Holding the compressed spheres in it's hand that were as bright as day, the three-headed dragon took the blow.

Originally it was thought that the ball would disappear upon contact with the aurora, but the aurora and the sphere interweave together to release an even greater heat.

"—Damn, this can also do it, bastard....!!!"

Injecting all the power into the pillar on his right hand and pushing it down.

But the burning sphere constructed by the three-headed dragon caused an even greater momentum, releasing a more shiny radiance.

The strong repulsive force released by the two burning spheres slowly turned into a ball of light, distorting the surrounding light with the power of its swirl.

The aurora as well as the hot lava waves was sent flying, the aftermath was the destruction of the volcano peak. The spheres that were in conflict with the power of the aurora forcefully crushed everything under the sun.

The rubble surrounding the two started to decompose to something smaller than an atom.

In the blurry vision, Izayoi saw the evil smiling Maou.

『It ended, divine son of the new era. With you——it is not enough to defeat the flag of [ ].

The aurora pillar and burning sphere simultaneously dissipated.

Watching the aftermath, Izayoi floated in the air like dust....

Chapter 2

Part 1

-Kouen City, in the pile of rubble.

The city was swallowed by the tsunami made of debris in a blink of an eye. The glittering glass streets no longer retained any of its former shape. Many of the artwork in the museums were lost. The flowing magma dyed the earth in scarlet.

The citizens that had already made preparations were carrying their luggage and fleeing from the city, heading toward the Gate with the fighters of Salamandra.

The tornado made by the three headed dragon, Azi Dakaha, flipped everything over regardless of friend or foe. This is no longer a time for games.

The fight against the Demon Lord Alliance was ended by a third party.

Kudou Asuka, who was fighting at the outer walls of Kouen City, avoided damage by entering Deen's armor that she had reenforced using her gift. Most likely because she hid with a tired body, her favorite ribbon

was undone, and her red dress was shortened to a provocative length.

Asuka waited for the other members of [No Name] with Pest at the end of the procession.

“Its been a while since Almathea[3] went to fetch them ……did something happen?”

“……How would I know.”

Pest retorted without composure. She was extremely worn from this disaster. Wiping her dripping sweat, she laid her body on Deen’s shoulder.

It has been a while since the mountain had erupted. Although the two had taken the role of guarding the evacuation procession, no assailants appeared. This made the procession go smoother.

The gate was located 27 kilometers away from the city.

The ones fleeing the city took shelter in the valleys of the mountains. The fortunate thing was that most of the citizens of Kouen City were spirits or avatars.

Some flew away, while others travelled through lay lines to reach other lands. Thanks to this, the small streets were not crowded and allowed smooth travels.

(*But on the other hand, it also means that there are many who do not have the power to run away….*)

The refugee's using the streets were mostly either human or were-beast.

They were the people who thought protection from the rank five Salamandra and held their headquarters here. Being invited as citizens rather than for their prowess, they had no use in the battlefield.

For this reason, the ones that could fight were split in to the front lines, the middle, and the tail guard in order to protect the fleeing citizens.

In the front line, Perseus, middle guard Salamandra, and tail guard [No Name].

"Look! Alma has come back!"

From the direction of her finger, a goat that sparked lightening came running. On the wool of the goats back laid a passed out Kuro Usagi, and a pale Kasukabe Yō.

Almathea, after noticing where Asuka was, jumped her way onto Deens shoulder with a single bound and curtsied.

{“Master, I am relieved to see that you are unharmed. I was worried that you were caught in that tornado.”}

“Eeh. Pest pushed me into Deen in the nick of time. That really saved me.”

She said her thanks to Pest, who sat next to her. Pest pursed her lips and looked away.

Correcting her gaze, Asuka asked Yō, who was sitting on the goats back.

“Kasukabe-san. I’m glad you’re okay too. Are you unhurt?”

“……Uhn.”

She moved her chin vertically, making a small nod.

It was a simple gesture, but Asuka felt an unpleasant worry squirm in her.

Yō not speaking much wasn't unusual, but now it was much worse than normal. An expression of fear coming from her pale face can be seen.

Noticing the severity of the situation, Asuka asked Almathea

"Alma. Where's Izayoi-kun and Jin-kun? Aren't they with you?"

{"……Yes. I have searched wide, but I could not locate Leader-dono. As for Izayoi-dono……"}

She cut her words with much chagrin. Yō also couldn't say anything and cast her gaze downward.

Under the heavy silence, Kuro Usagi woke up.

"……Every, one…..?"

"Kuro Usagi. I'm glad you're ok too."

Noticing that Kuro Usagi was awake, Asuka held out her hand. Unable to understand the situation, Kuro Usagi shook her head in a daze.

While holding her head, she looked at her surroundings. Confirming Asuka, Yō, Almathea, and Deen's presence, Kuro Usagi muttered as if she had just remembered something horrible.

"……Where is, Izayoi-san? Is he not with you?"

She asked Yō and Almathea with a quivering voice.

Replacing Almathea, Yō said in a tiny voice.

"Izayoi…….. isn't coming. He stayed alone."

"Wha"

{"When I had arrived, he was heavily injured. He probably thought that he couldn't flee with those wounds. He left Kuro Usagi-dono and Kasukabe-dono to me, and fought the Demon Lord by himself."}

Yō grinded her teeth. Being one who thought a lot of her comrades, leaving behind her friend was a choice of pain unneeded of expression.

Contrastingly, Almathea's monotonous voice made Kuro Usagi quiver in rage, and she grabbed the goat.

"T, To do such a thing……!! If you truly are the Celestial Beast of the Mountain Goat, you know what kind of Demon Lord that is! That thing, Azi Dakaha is not an ordinary Demon Lord! That Demon Lord is one that killed many gods, a Last Embryo! Even if it was Izayoi-san there is no chance of winning! You would know that, yet why!?"

{"Of course I knew. And above that, Izayoi-dono also knew. Thinking it was his time of doom, he entrusted me with you."}

—"Take Kuro Usagi and run!"—

She let go of the fur. Hearing Almathea's words, Kuro Usagi remembered the scene that was locked in the back of her head.

Kuro Usagi also heard Izayoi's voice, since she was there.

And she also remembered the last words he had said.

"Sorry. Looks like I have to break the promise—"

"AH……..Aaah…….!!"

Moaning, Kuro Usagi bends her knees cried. It wasn't that she didn't know all of those things. But she wanted someone to refute the last scene.

To say that that wasn't the end.

She wanted someone to agree that if it was Izayoi, he would have escaped even that fight.

"……..I'm sorry. I was there, and I couldn't do anything."

Yō clutched her pendant in agony. Facing the Three Headed Dragon, all she could do was escape while leaving Izayoi. That regret was unfathomable.

This is the same as the "Rise of the Fire Dragon Festival". She had tried desperately to fight alongside him……..In the end, everything was left to Izayoi. Trying to match his strength with effort, he was left to a place far away.

"Yō-san….."

{"Kuro Usagi-dono. I comprehend your pain. But please understand. Under these circumstances, the only one who could distract the Demon Lord was him. Because Izayoi-dono had gambled his life, this many citizens were able to focus on escape."}

Loosening her tone, Almathea licked Kuro Usagi's cheek.

Almathea had not planned on leaving behind Izayoi. Actually, under the most desperate circumstance, she was planning on stopping the Demon Lord herself. But

Izayoi's resolve was much stronger than her own. If anyone had heard his words back then, they would have understood.

That shout, was one that declared his life was gambled .

"……Alma. Is Izayoi-kun, dead?"

{"I have not confirmed his death. He could have also ran away, but……..with his wounds, it would have been difficult."}

Almathea was avoiding frankness, but Asuka was not a dull witted girl. It was more obvious than watching a fire that Izayoi fought with his life on the line. Asuka was prepared for the worst, but reality was even harsher. They've had many struggles, but this paled all the others.

Kuro Usagi lost her powers, Jin was missing, and Izayoi was fighting the Demon Lord alone.

The only fighting forces left were Asuka and Yō, but they could not do anything.

"……That being said, this isn't the time to be feeling down."

Pashi! She slapped her cheeks to make her resolve.

Asuka returned her gaze to Almathea, and asked again .

“I understand the situation. But there’s not enough information about that Three Headed Dragon. If you know something, Alma, give us some information. You know about that thing, correct?”

{“Yes. If its the olden ones of Little Garden, there is no Evil God I’m unaware of. Master, have you ever heard of the religion Zoroastrianism[4] ?”}

Nope, Asuka shook her head to her sides.

Alma spoke of the sect the Three Headed Dragon belonged to with a nervous expression.

{“Zoroastrianism’s evil gods hold the flag of Aksara (Evil), and have recked Little Garden as the enemies of the Peaceful Gods. Although he is now considered the virtuosic representative of the gods, I hear that Taishakuten[5] used to be a Demon lord under the flag of Zoroastrianism.”}

Taishakuten; the one that the aristocrat of Little Garden, Kuro Usagi, holds as her chief god, and a War Deity. Asuka has heard that Kuro Usagi's many weapons were Gifts bestowed upon her by Taishakuten.

While looking at Kuro Usagi, whose head was hung, Asuka asks.

"Then that dragon is as powerful as Taishakuten?"

If that was so, then it would be a dreadful obstacle. Just by pure fighting prowess, it would easily exceed the Giant Dragon. It wasn't by much, but it was not an enemy [No Name] could defeat.

But Almathea's answer was unexpected.

{"……Yes. At least, they were back then."}

"…..? What does that mean?"

Yō, who was listening next to them, asked in a pointed tone.

{"That Three Headed Dragon is not an ordinary Demon Lord……No, it should be said that that is a true Demon Lord"}

"Meaning, not in the sense of abusing their Host Master Authority?"

{"It's actually the opposite. Demon Lords are the avatar of the Trail itself. Host Master Authority's were created in order to release the user's inner space, and rob a portion of the old Demon Lords strength, as a secret technique. Its misuse was after the old Demon Lords were sealed, and Little Garden became stable."}

Hearing Almathea's words, Asuka thinks back on Host Master Authorities.

"Jack the monster" was a trial that activated when the player, who had used, abused, or killed a child was in the vicinity. It was a virtuous game. That was the original use of the Host Master.

{"A true Demon lord is a different means of trial. No, thats not a trial to begin with. Able to wipe out humanity , the avatar of the ultimate trial; We call them "Last Embryo"(Final trial of Humanity)"}

"……Last Embryo"

"Have you heard of it? That a Demon Lord is treated as a "Natural disaster"? That is meant literally. A natural disaster of harsh lightning and rain. A natural disaster of moving plate tectonics. The spreading of a plague. The reason why the many gods are the avatar of such thing is because we were able to raise the awareness of the impending disaster on humans, and that us gods were able to cure it. Although there are some exceptions like the movement of the solar bodies."}

Hmm, nodding, the two then took a side-glance at Pest .

The spreading of the Black Death was one of the best examples.

Having killed one third of the worlds population, it could be counted the trial against the prosperity of man kind.

"Then that Three Headed Dragon is also a Demon Lord that integrated with a natural disaster, time period, or a planetary movement?"

{"……Most likely. Azi Dakaha was not that strong in the old days. In the Middle Eastern lore, the 12 Devas or

"Great Sage Equaling Heaven", in Western lore, the War goddesses or the Kings of the Dead would be his equal. But one day; including Azi Dakaha, all the Demon Lords somehow gained immense increase in their powers. Just one could hold off a million gods."}

"A, A Million Gods!?"

Asuka and Yō expressed their disbelief loudly, forgetting their situation. If that was true, this was not a matter of whether he was strong or not. He was literally on a different level.

The groaning Kuro Usagi clenched her fist and confirmed the statement.

"Those words…….are true. Its not even a metaphor. In an age long past, this Little Garden held the existence of many more gods than now. But most of them were killed by the Old Demon Lords."

{"To defeat the Old Demon Lords who's existence were a trial in itself, was physically impossible. Thats why a method of releasing spiritual power in the form of a trial was made as the trump card of the gods; "Host Master Authority". Also the origin of Gift Games."}

This was the true reason why Gift Games were called the games of the gods.

The legacy of the war against gods and demon lords went through the spans of time and evolved into the form known today.

“So…….Calling someone who abuses their Host Master Authority a Demon Lord is because of that?”

{“Yes. It turns ones spiritual power into a trial itself, so essentially its the same.”}

“But, wait! If that story is true, if we had someone use their Host Master Authority, can we somehow defeat that Three Headed Dragon?”

Yō raises her hand and asks.

But Almathea shakes her head to her sides bitterly.

{“In theory, yes. Whether its a time period or a natural disaster, it would be a clashing of trials. But in order to defeat Azi Dakaha, or a Host Master that can seal it, we’ll need someone from the Strongest species or one with fighting prowess equal to those in the Divine Army……”
}

"How about Kouryuu-san?"

"Great Sage Who Devastates Seas", Saurian Demon King.

Having fought alongside "Great Sage Equaling Heaven", Sun Wukong, and "Great Sage Pacifying Heavens", Bull Demon King, against the gods in a massive brawl, he may have a one in a million of a chance of winning.

But, this was rejected by Asuka.

"Its unfortunate, but Kouryuu-san is missing. That goes for Sandra, Willa, Jack, and [Perseus]'s babied young master as well. We're in a state where the refugee's are somehow being managed by Salamandra."

Yō gulped. The situation was so much worse than she had expected, and was at a loss of words.

—There really was no move they could make. Yō was re-enlightened on how devastating their situation was. Excluding the rear guards Asuka and Pest, the main forces were near annihilated.

"…..This is troublesome. Without Izayoi-kun, we can't even think up a proper strategy."

Unable to contain her frustration, Asuka said those words in self mockery.

Up till now, all fights against the Demon Lords were coordinated and directed by Izayoi. Speaking negatively, they were even reliant on him. Although in a twisted sense, the reason why [No Name] was able to fight against Demon lords was because of Izayoi's efforts. Venting her frustration at herself for not being able to do anything, Asuka felt

Zugashu!

Painful. Not her heart, but her head physically hurt.

She remembered this taste of blunt pain from an unseen angle. Shaking while gripping the cross shaped hammer that fell from the sky, Asuka shouted while veins popped on her head.

"Wi……WILLA THE IGNISFATUS! You're there aren't you!? Come out immediately!!"

Au, a sound similar to a shriek was heard, and Willa fell down from the sky.

Willa, holding a guilty face, fearfully looked up towards the group.

“I, I’m sorry.“

“Are you really!? I was hit by a blunt object twice by you! Can’t you greet people normally!?”

“M, Mahmah[6]. Calm down Asuka……Willa, we’re glad you’re safe. You suddenly disappeared so we were worried.”

Yō stopped Asuka while smiling bitterly. Willa was almost crying from being scolded. After wiping her tears with her sleeve, she apologized again.

“I’m, really sorry……When the dragon came, I was the first to run away…….I felt guilty of joining you.”

“I still wonder why that constitutes hitting people with blunt objects.”

With Asuka's additional bitter words, Willa droops her shoulders.

Almathea clacked her hooves and called to the others.

{"Anyhow, this is a devastating situation where the Leader and the Tactician are both unavailable. Me and master will represent the Community and warn Salamandra, then head to the front lines. Are there any objections?"}

"Uhuhn. I'm ok with that. Pest?"

"……No objections."

{"Very well. Then please ride on me."}

Clacking her hooves, she prompts them to ride on her back. Asuka hesitated for only a second, then rode on her back while grabbing the reigns. Jumping off Deen's shoulder, Almathea ran through the valley of streets and headed for the Salamandra members that were guarding the middle of the procession. Most of the refugees did not hold luggages, and wore dark expressions while being in line. Not only has a Demon Lord come, but their city that they have lived in for along time was also gone. There were many that looked back at Kouen City that

had sunk under the molten lava and held tears in their eyes.

Asuka, while feeling the cold sweat running on her back, looked behind her.

The giant ridge was covered by molten rock and exuded a horrifying light. Thinking of the person fighting somewhere at the peak, she grit her teeth in shame.

Hanging on to the running Almathea, Asuka's expression twisted into a bitter form.

"…….Alma. Can Izayoi-kun win against it?"

{"He can't. Nobody can defeat that. Against a monster that took even the Divine Army many of its troops to simply seal, there is no possible way a lone human can win."}

She clipped her words with blunt truthfulness. That was her way of being kind. If she hadn't said that, Alma knew that Asuka would have definitely went to assist him.

Asuka took those feelings into consideration, and simply glared at the ridge.

"……Still, Izayoi-kun will be fine. We'll have to do what we can."

{"Yes. Thank you for understanding."}

Thunder reverberated as Almathea increased her speed, turning into lightening.

—Soon after, a change occurred.

{"!? Master, please hold on!"}

Eh? As soon as she made that sound, Almathea leapted into the air.

At first, Asuka had no idea what was going on, but understood the situation from the hot air that brushed her cheek. Looking down, they could see the street that they had been running on a second ago was melted by dark red flames.

{"Its an enemy! And not just any average enemy!"}

As soon as Almathea shouted, a ball of fire shot out of the woods near the streets, hurling toward them. Kicking the air like stepping stones, Almathea somehow dodged the rapidly increasing fire balls, and looked for her attacker. While looking toward the woods, a giant shadow covered the two.

“Alma, above!!”

Immediately, Almathea looked toward the higher sky.

Having been sidetracked, Almathea sees her enemy and is twice surprised.

—A monstrous dragon with two heads, whose body was made out white marble. The only piece that was flesh, his crimson eyes, sparkled with a hideous light and eyed its prey.

Those eyes showed no signs of sentiment. This creature was not given any emotions. Its only motive for moving was to hunt down its opponents.

“GEEEYAAAAaaaa!!!”

Roaring, the Two Headed Dragon raised its fangs and attacked.

Reasoning that she could not run away from such a violent attack, Almathea abandoned her form as a mountain goat and became an iron liquid. Using her body made of adamantium[7] , she wrapped around Asuka and focused on defending her.

Taking a direct hit, the iron orb was hit into the woods near the streets. Although her body was protected, Asuka still felt the impact.

Frowning at the numb pain that assaulted her, Asuka asked,

“”Alma……Is that”

{“Yes, that is the clone of Azi Dakaha! It’s not an ordinary monster! Please think of each of them as strong as a being given divinity!”}

Reverting to her form as a mountain goat, Alma put Asuka on to the ground.

The cries of refugee’s being attacked by the Twin Headed Dragon could be heard. If that dragon was at the same level of power as one with divinity, there was a limit to the people who could fight it. Wanting to

immediately head toward it, Asuka straddles Alma's back, but the trees fell toward them, preventing departure.

"There's one more….!?"

{"Master, please Divinify me immediately. This is not an opponent that can be dealt with while conserving Gifts. Having a quick, decisive battle would be for the best."}

Racking her hooves on the ground, she concentrated on locating her enemy. Even though her opponent could not be seen, the presence wrapping around the woods were powerful. The trees pulsated as one, making them seem like one organism.

As Almathea had said, hiding their prowess would not help at all. Asuka made her resolve, took out her wine red gift card, and summoned four crystals and a wind-cutting flute.

While they prepared for battle, large cries could be heard.

"Gyyyaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

"A Dragon! A two headed dragon appeared!"

"Fire Dragon Squad, immediately take a perimeter! Demi-Dragon Squad, quicken the pace of the refugees!"

Among the shouts and screams, explosive noises could be heard. Even from afar pillars of fire could be seen standing in the waves of the panic-stricken streets.

While feeling the cold sweat run down her back, Asuka turned her gaze toward the rear of the procession.

(Kasukabe-san…….Pest, Deen. I leave that side to you.)

Praying once to her comrades, she gave her crystals artificial divinity. Having her spiritual power expanded, Almathea thundered toward the Dragon within in the forest.

Part 2

Kasukabe Yō entered battle mode right before Almathea was attacked by the marble Two Headed Dragons.

"Asuka…….!"

Immediately, she activated Genome Tree. The wings on her legs were not the ones of a Pegasus. The new equipment with sharp claws at the tip of the foot were one that constituted a more evil Eudaemon.

30th rank in the 72 pillars of Solomon, demonic beast ‘ Marchosias’[8].

With a griffon;s wings and a snake's tail, a wolf-type Third Generation Eudaemon.

“Wait right there, I’ll save you…….!”

She exuded the glittering wind of the Gryphon and Pegasus, and also releases the hell flames of the demonic wolf.

—“Marchosias is a demonic wolf that ranked highly amongst the Third Generation Eudaemons. Aside from the dragon kin, those who could beat it alone were limited. Even though it was lowly ranked, it was a Eudaemon that even reached the level of being a Demon Lord.

Although it was a beast that could unleash hellish flames from its mouth, its true worth was not in its fighting abilities.

A part of that power saved Yō and Kuro-Usagi an instant later.

“…….! Kuro Usagi! Grab on!”

“Heh? Y, yes!”

Kuro Usagi was confused for a moment, but was pushed into action by Yō’s agitation and grabbed her hand. Hugging her, Yō jumped toward Deen’s sides.

A moment later, a large amount of flaming bullets shot at the two from an animal trail.

Yō unleashed the glittering wind and raging flames around her to protect herself. With the Gift of a high ranked Third Generation Eudaemon, the flaming tempest didn’t falter a single bit upon receiving the flaming salvo.

“Yō-san! Behind you!!”

Kuro Usagi shouted. The two headed dragon that swatted Asuka down preyed its eye on her.

But Yō calmly flipped her body and took the deadly blades with her left boot. At perfect timing, before she was overwhelmed, she launched herself at its chest.

The marble two headed dragon boldly took Yō's attack , and stiffened its body. It most likely did not expect to be counterattacked in that timing.

After launching at its chest and spinning in mid-air, Yō shot through both of the two headed dragon's jaws from below.

"Gya…..!"

"A, amazing!"

Kuro Usagi uttered her cry of admiration while being carried by Yō.

Judging only by attack and defense, Yō's physical prowess didn't pale to Kuro Usagi's.

If the fact that she could accelerate in mid-air was taken into account, it could be said she surpassed the rabbit. It's more closer to an animal's way of fighting rather then martial arts, but her ways of correctly using her gift made self-styled fighting shine all the more.

(*I knew she had talent, but this is a much faster rate of growth than I expected….!*)

The two headed dragon that had its jaws pierced fell as it rained blood from its body. It wasn't a fatal wound, but it seemed to be enough to make it faint for a while.

After seeing it fall, Yō's gaze was directed toward the woods at the corner of the street.

Concentrating flames to her right foot, she created a flaming tempest and burned down the forest.

"H, hey Yō-san?"

Receiving the raging hot air, Kuro Usagi raised a shriek.

All the while, the flaming tempest moved on as it burned down the forest. Even the refugee's were

screaming, but they were guarded from the heat by Deen ’s giant form that pushed it back.

It was a strategy that could not be expected from Yō, a blow both bold and large scaled.

But in Yō’s eyes, there was no light of victory, and showed an increased sign of precaution.

The two headed dragon was swallowed into the tempest, but it remained unharmed as it sat in the middle of the storm.

Falling straight down suddenly, Yō got closer to Willa, and handed Kuro Usagi to her.

“Willa. Please escort the refugee’s and Kuro Usagi. The only one who can protect them is you.”

“Me? Then, what are you going to do?”

“I’ll stop them…….no”

She stopped her own words. This was rare for the quite but outspoken Yō.

Looking at the fiery tornado she herself had unleashed , she said in a tone with conviction.

“Those two dragons…….I will defeat. So Willa, please take care of Kuro Usagi…..!”

Raising both her will to fight and the glittering wind, she shot up.

Immediately, the fiery tornado was ripped in two by the two headed dragon.

“Willa! Deen! Pest! I leave the rest to you!”

“G, got it!”

“DEeEN!”

“……..,”

Willa teleported toward the main forces of Salamandra . Deen stood at the rear, put the injured and slow ones on his shoulder and raised his pace. Pest opened her mouth as if she wanted to say something, but ended up saying nothing as she unleashed black wind at the flanks of the procession to tighten their guard.

Yō unleashed a aura of sharp strength, and stood toward the two headed dragons.

The one that came out of the tornado was a dark red dragon made of molten lava. Replacing blood, lava flowed and pulsated, giving it an impressive representation of a monster.

But even facing that rare figure, Yō's feelings were calm.

Or rather, they were extremely cold.

"……..Your opponent, is me."

Without thinking, her voice came out.

Even surprising to her, there was a clear sound of rage in her voice. Realizing the source of this feeling was right in front of her, she raised her voice and shouted at the two headed dragons.

"Because of you ……..Izayoi had to gamble his life unfairly. I was fighting Maxwell Demon Lord, and was finally going to fight shoulder to shoulder"

Izayoi's last words were "Take Kuro Usagi and run".

But what she really wanted to hear was simple.

“Fight with me against the Demon Lord.” But those were never heard until the end.

Yō knew that their level of strength differed greatly.

But finally, she saw the back of that strength she was reaching for. She was going to compete with him shoulder to shoulder, and live together in fun and joy.

But that back has once again gone far.

Maybe, so far away that her hands could not reach.

“I will protect Kuro Usagi. That is my promise with Izayoi. Thats why I’ll see her to the Astral Gate…… After that, is my freedom to choose.”

The anger poured out, but had no place to go.

It was directed toward her enemy, but also to her incompetent self. She really wanted to stay with Izayoi in order to help, but could not forgive herself for not being able to do so.

—For both reason and benefit, she had abandoned her comrade.

In order to regain what she had abandoned, there was a need for proof.

The proof that she could steal him back, even if she had to overcome a pile of rubble, and split hell itself.

Gripping the Genome Tree, to prove her self, Yō's lips said the name of a new Eudaemon.

"Genome Tree…….Form, "Vinama Garda"[9]…….!!!"

Instantly, golden wind surrounded Kasukabe Yō.

The form of Marchosias was melted, turning into flaxen cloth that wrapped around Yō. The cloth with no sleeves turned into a protective ritual garb, and on her head a katsyusha[10] adorned with a feather was laid on.

An illuminating light that shined as if to brighten the dark night.

To compare, it was the light of the sun.

Feeling the stately golden wind, the monstrous two headed dragons took a step back.

—Fear, kin of the pernicious god.

This shine is the golden Gift that burns through all impurities. In Indian lore, it has abolished Mara, and is promised to win against even the war gods, the half-man half-bird slayer of evil gods.

"A……..A Great Garuda? The same strongest species that the Roc Demon King belongs to!?

But, that can't be! Its impossible! Does the Genome Tree even have the power to weaponize that species?"

Kuro Usagi's astonishment was to be expected.

The Genome Tree had weaponized legendary creatures such as Kirin, Pegasus, and Marchosias, but this Eudaemon was a world apart.

No, a Garuda was not even categorized as a Eudaemon.

(*These Flames of the Golden Wings are real……. But there is no way she can use the power of the Strongest Species without risk! Yō-san should be paying a toll of some sort in order to use power beyond her ability…..!?*)

Watching the light that Yō wore, Kuro Usagi couldn't help feeling apprehensive.

But that was same feeling as Yō.

Greya Grief, who used the same Genome Tree, had clearly stated that a risk existed. This Gift definitely had a hidden toll.

(*Until today, I was afraid of that risk. Thats why I limited which Eudaemons to use. But that fear,…….made Izayoi fight alone…….!!!*)

The massive power that resided in her body. If she could produce such a strength, she would not have been treated as someone in the way. If she had used such power, Izayoi would have definitely said it.

He would have said "Fight with me against the Demon Lord."

"I will no longer ponder. I will defeat you……..and go help Izayoi……..!!!"

"GEEYAAAAaaa!!!"

The Two Headed Dragon and the Great Garuda clashed by frontal assault.

Both with their reasons in their heart, the battle intensified.

Interlude

(……..*Where……?*)

In the deep forest, Jin Russel woke up groggily.

When he tried to move, he realized that he was bound.

The heated pain he felt on his stomach was most likely where Rin had stabbed him. Maxwell had said that he had cauterized[11] the wound, but there was evidence of first aid over it. Because Rin had stabbed between the organs, the damage had only amounted to a small wound. But that doesn't change the fact that he had been stabbed. He felt dizzy after losing blood.

Toward Jin who was moving like a bug, His Highness, who was sitting on a tree, noticed him and spoke.

"Jin, you're awake."

"Highness…….?"

"Aah, don't move. Even if your organs are safe, your stomach was still punctured. You should rest. Unlike us, Jin seems to be a normal human, physically."

Jumping down from the tree, His Highness showed his face. Looking at him, he was covered in wounds. The damage showed how fierce the battle against Izayoi was.

"What happened to the game?"

"Me and Sakamaki Izayoi ended it with mutual agreement. Well, it was in that situation. Jin should also forget about that wound."

"……..You really are the worst."

He slumped his body tiredly. If he can't run, it couldn't be helped. Jin gave up on amending this situation. Besides, he reaped what he had sowed. He had gambled knowing that this situation might occur.

Listening carefully, he could hear the churning of a river near by.

In a cluster of mountains connected to the giant ridge, the members of Uroboros gathered. Aside from Rin and Maxwell, everyone was injured to a varying degree. Maxwell had used his teleportation abilities to retreat, and had observed the situation in Kouen City. Rin, being the only one who hadn't fought, was giving medical treatment to the black gryphon and Aura.

But the expression of disappointment was clear on Rin's face.

While taking things out from the first aid kit, Rin listlessly sighed.

"Hah…….The plan worked, but I didn't expect everyone to be this severely injured. I'm disappointed at everyones abilities as the Game Maker."

{"N,Nu…..!"}

"You say that, Rin, but Greya was attacked by a Celestial Beast and I was attacked by the Saurian Demon King. I wish you'd just compliment us for surviving."

"Please shut up. Leaving aside Oji-sama for a moment, all Aura-san had to do was guard the summoning circle behind the Giant clan. You're being trusted, so please be able to do at least that much."

Peshili! Rin hits the dressed wound.

His Highness, who had already taken emergency treatment, laughed listlessly and nodded.

"Its as Rin says. Recently, you two haven't achieved much. As your boss, I'm hoping to see some results from both of your hard work."

"Saying so, don't act like the boss when you came back broken and defeated!"

Peshili! she smacks His Highness on the head.

Although he's making small talk, His Highness was the one undoubtfully the most heavily injured. Having injured every muscle, with cracks in his bones, he was retrieved in a state of an anatomical mess.

"You took on the role of the Game Master with so much confidence, so I didn't think you'd come back losing. As a Maker, this situation is just sad. Wouldn't have been better if I took on the role of Game Master and bought us some time?"

"Not really. And I didn't lose. Today we just compared our basic stats."

"And, you lost by basic stats."

"I didn't lose. As a Candidate of Origin, I was just less complete."

Mu, he corrected Rin's statement. Its a pointless conversation, Rin sighed, but she started discussing their gains in order to change the mood.

"With all given damages, thank you all for your efforts . Leaving aside our losses at battle, the results are more than satisfactory. Saying it in a different way, we can say that it was our complete victory!"

Taking out a her lapis lazuli colored gift card, she lined up the gifts they robbed from Kouen City.

First, the horn of the Star Sea Dragon King.

Second, the treasure sword of the Chinese Zodiac, " Dragon".

Third, something that looked like a spherical astrolabe.

{"Rin. Is that astrolabe the so called "Another Cosmology?"}

"Yes. When talking about the cosmology of Chinese lore, the Celestial Equator is the most famous. This one is a cosmology mirroring that…..a star map for "Grand Duke, Tai Sui"."

Hugging the astrolabe, Rin proudly explains her prize.

Uroboros have many high class gifts like “Erin Grimmoire” and “Barol’s Evil Eye” but this gift was a class above those.

—“Grand Duke, Tai Sui”[12].

Tai Sui was originally a high class Demon King in Chinese mythology known as the “Star of Disaster”, Grand Duke Jupiter. His real identity is a Celestial Spirit of a fictional planet placed opposite of Jupiter.

In Chinese mythology, Jupiter is taken as the basics to the Celestial Equator, a Divine star. Its also worshipped as the Age Star. Even in the Golden Zodiac Twelve, Jupiter is at the center of basics, and is said to be the half-body of the mightiest god, Zeus.

Tai Sui is famous as a Celestial Spirit with a form of three faces and six arms, as well as a dragon that looks similar to a catfish.

Unlike other Celestial Spirits, being a fictitious star may have lead to Tai Sui being spoken of in different forms. The reason why he changed his name to the Star

Sea Dragon King was most likely to hide his own true nature.—

His Highness took the sword of the ‘Dragon’, and spun it in the air joyfully as he added an explanation.

“The “Another Cosmology” is the secret technique of the gods. It can also be said that its their world that makes them. Norse’s Asgard, Buddhism’s Three Thousand Worlds, and Zoroastrianism’s dualism of good and evil. Us Oroboros’s “Another Cosmology” is also our best weapon.”

“Yeah That! I completely forgot, but why didn’t you use your “Another Cosmology”? You wanted to compare basic stats, right?”

Against Rin’s question, His Highness shook his head.

“Don’t say such stupid things. If me and Sakamaki Izayoi had hit each other with our “Another Cosmology” [13], Kouen City would be blown away without a trace.”

“…….Well, that's true.”

Rin slumps her shoulders. After the conversation had ended, the Demon Lord of Confusion who had been scouting for enemies……in the form of Sandra, came back with a uncouth laugh.

“Ohoh, you guys havin’ fun without me. Makin’ this Demon Lord of Confusion-sama go out on patrol like a slave while you guys party; such a high standing, eh?”

“Of course not! This Games MVP is definitely no one other then you, Demon Lord of Confusion-sama. You alone completely did your given task. I’m actually astonished by how smoothly you worked.”

Rin gave him praise with no lie in her voice.

Demon Lord of Confusion in Sandra’s body stuck his (her?) chest up proudly.

“O’ course. I’ve got mor’ experience ya know. But, I’m a li’le worried ‘bout that Pumpkin bastards game dis’ pearing……. oh, brat, you're ‘wake.”

Demon Lord of Confusion turned toward Jin.

Jin glares at the possessed Sandra.

"……..Demon Lord of Confusion. Is your Host Master Authority to take over others?"

"Yeap. But I can only use i' on one, plus it only 'pplies to brats. Its us'fullness is the lowest o' the lowest o' the lowest's shit and low'r, even if it' a Host Master Authority. Well, it wor'ed 'gainst this lonely gir' so I ain't complainin'. "

Sitting down crossed legged, he pokes Jin's head. It was a way of speech and action that differed greatly from Sandra, but if the person inside was different, it could be understood.

Staring at him emotionlessly, Jin muttered.

"That body is Sandra's. Please handle it with care. **If anything, never let her have her head split open.**"

"…….Heeh~?"

The Demon Lord of Confusion's eye shined malevolently.

That eye held a color of danger that couldn't be seen before.

“’s that so. Hihi. You're no ordinary brat, ain’t cha? So, what we doin’ wi’ this guy? Takin’ him with us?”

“Yes. The gift he holds is extremely valuable. But before that…….Maxwell-san!”

She called toward empty space.

The boundary of heat was split, and with hot air and cold air[14] Maxwell showed himself.

“You called, Maker-dono.”

“Yes. Please hit the remaining refugees and fighting forces escorting them. With your teleportation abilities, you alone is sufficient for the task.”

With Rin's demands, Maxwell scrunches his face.

It felt like a order for a servant, and he already didn’t trust Rin. It made him think that making him go to the battlefield alone most likely had an ulterior motive behind it.

Realizing his suspicions, Rin sighed in an exaggerated manner.

"Hah…….Really. Maxwell-san has no clue what-so-ever about a woman's heart."

"Hah?"

A woman's heart? Given an unexpected term, he gave a surprised voice.

Bishi[15]! Rin pointed at Maxwell and said

"Are you listening? Your bride, Willa the Ignifatus is in a desperate situation. She definitely feels insecure. She would want someone to rely on. She would want a prince to come save her! In that depressing situation, if a cool experienced beautiful loser stalker arrived, no matter how gross that person is she definitely would easily roll on the floor love struck!"

"Roll on the floor love struck, you said!?"

"Yes! If everything goes well it would be mommi-mommi- and pafu-pafu[16]!"

"Mommi-mommi- and pafupafu, you said!?"

"Yes, you newly reigning demon lord! Your bride, Willa the Ignifatus is right now, waiting for a prince to come to her rescue!"

ZUDOOOOOOOOOOOOOONNNNNNNN!!!!!!

And, with that idiotic sound effect, Maxwell's ON switch was flipped.

Shuddering from the joy of this revelation, Maxwell reached out to the heaven as if he had been given a message from there.

"Willa…….Is waiting for me……!?"

"Yes! That's exactly it! If he can't even go to the rescue of your beloved than your name as a perverted stalker would blemish! Right now is the time to hold your heart to your sleeve and blow an annoying tempest of love, Maxwell!"

"U,….OOooo…….WI, WILLLLLLLAAAAAAAAA!!!!! " I'M COMING TO YOU RIGHT NOOOOOOOOOWWWWWWWW!!!!"

In a storm of hot air and cold air, the newest Demon Lord left the place.

That was not a metaphor. He really had mobilized as a storm of romantic passion.

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Finally, when a cold night wind accompanied by tumbleweed[17] had blown, Rin coughed once and said

“Well well, now the obstinate……..No. That gross person is gone.”

“So true.”

“Yes.”

{“Umu”}

“You guys ‘re horrible.”

But he didn’t deny it.

Rin walked towards Jin, and bent her legs to shorten the distance of her face to his.

“Jin-kun. Lets get to the main topic. Continue the topic we were talking about, with everybody.”

Chapter 3

Part 1

The forest near the City steadily turned into a sea of trees.

The pulsating roots of the trees tangled with each other and made it look like one organism. The two headed dragon born from a rotten tree tried to absorb the forest and conquer the land itself. The rotten tree that was given divinity as the twin headed dragon absorbed the beasts within the forest and rapidly turned into a terrain god.

But the two headed dragon was not a god that bestowed blessings.

It was a tyrant that ate the long living blessings of the land.

The two headed dragon devoured the forest and its inhabitants. Having their will stolen and becoming monster trees, the trees of the forest destroyed the land.

The water that took hundreds of years to collect was all absorbed by the monstrous tree roots.

The soil that was full of nutrients began to grow pale in color, like a desert.

—The mountains themselves became one with the dragon.

If the two headed dragon that absorbed the mountains began attacking the refugee's, annihilation would be inevitable. If it grew any more larger, regions in lands far beyond would also be affected.

The two headed dragon of the rotten tree expanded greedily.

While spreading its roots, it realized there was a region that it could not devour.

(……)

Although it was a monster that had no intelligence, it did have the wisdom that could be used in battle. The region that the roots were not able to penetrate, most likely had an aboriginal terrain goddess.

The two headed dragon of the rotten tree snarled, showing its fangs.

The place he thought was an empty forest happened to have a guardian deity. It was enthusiastic upon finding some competition.

Invasions had their resistances. It was necessary. It was a pleasure above all.

To devour the land, the sea of trees began their invasion.

(……*?*)

Suddenly, it encountered an unexpected hostility.

The dragon had lost its control over the trees that were invading. No, not only those trees, but the guardian deity also began taking back the land that had been invaded without resistance.

That invasion speed far surpassed the two headed dragon's.

The waning water sources rapidly became saturated, and nutrients once more returned to the dead soil. The guardian deity that had suddenly appeared took back the land the two headed dragon invaded at three times its speed.

"—GEEEYAAAaaa!!!!"

The two headed dragon's decision was quick.

It forcibly cut off the blessings and the land it had invaded from the rest of the forest. Even if it lost in the speed of invasion, its battle power was still better.

The two headed dragon of the rotten tree leaped toward its enemy as fast as the wind.

But that leap was intercepted by an iron wall.

{"So you show your face, clone!"}

Turning into a flowing energy being, Almathea rammed into the two headed dragons stomach with lightening fast speed. Her horns sank deeply into its stomach.

But, that move turned against her.

Spreading nectar instead of blood, the dragon created new demons from the nectar. The abominations in the forms of snakes began to entangle Almathea's hoof, restraining her.

{“As if this would work!”}

From her wool, electricity ran about. The snakes, burned to crisps, fell off her hoof.

But that single moment was enough for the dragon to pass by her.

Slipping past the guard of the Celestial Beast, the dragon headed toward its enemy. Sensing a presence that grew stronger, it stopped its feet.

—A vibrating bell. The sound of a flute cutting through the wind.

The two contrasting sounds reached the dragon’s sensory hearing organs, and made it stop.

“……..!!?”

As soon as it stopped its legs, the trees began rebelling against the two headed dragon. Its power was incomparably sharper than when it was in control.

The roots became spears, while the leaves became blades. The earth became a hard fist and began pummeling the dragon. Each attack had the power to injure the two headed dragon.

"GEEEYAAAaaa!!!!"

Receiving the rebellion of the forest, the dragon screamed.

The two headed dragon of the rotten tree finally realized it.

The presence that repelled the invasion it had cast. The lands that had once fallen, now had a hint of holiness. If it was just a terrain god that had robbed back its territory , this result would not have happened.

—This was definitely not the work of a terrain goddess. A godly spirit on par with an Earth Goddess, had been giving Divinity to the lands…….!

"—Area recovery, Divinification of the lands complete …..!! The results are satisfactory for something done on the fly! You should have no complaints, Almathea!"

Hearing Asuka's voice, the Celestial Beast of the Mountain Goat bleated. Making its entire body into a volt of lightning, it sped in front of the dragon, facing it.

{"I couldn't even say "not bad". It's well done, master. I know no one else that could master "Shrine Craft" in this short amount of time."}

Almathea praised without restraint.

But at the same time, she was thinking about her master's priceless talent.

—Being born with a valuable Gift that gave others Virtual Divinity, Kudou Asuka.

In her hands, she held a wind-cutting flute once belonging to a kidnapping demon affiliated with [Grim Grimoire; Hamelin], Ratten, that Jack had customized.

Originally, it was a Gift that controlled the hearts of humans with its sound, but was changed by Jack into a Gift that "by the sound of cutting the wind, it told the words of its wielder to others."

If someone other than Asuka used it, it would be a simple gift of communication, but with a Gift that gave Divinity to others with her words, the effects changed greatly.

The large spread Divinification of the lands, restraining her enemy, fortification of Gifts and comrades .

All these options were enabled with one action. Pairing this with the invincible shield Almathea, calling it the “Holy Shrine Fort” would not be far fetched.

These two were definitely created for Asuka’s sake.

(*An unparalleled talent….! Master was unquestionably born to become the leader among gods*)

But if that was the case, several puzzles would appear.

The biggest question would be her body.

If Almathea saw correctly, her body was unquestionably that of a human. If blown, she would fly, and if dropped, she would break. A fragile form.

(*I heard that master was thought to be a type an Atavistic phenomenon by an acquaintance, but that would not explain everything. Then the most likely possibility is that her current body is only temporal…….*)

"Alma! Start concentrating!"

Alma returned from her inner thoughts. Now was not the time to figure out her Masters origins. Now was the time to concentrate on the enemy in front of her.

Turning her entire body into a streaming body of Adamantium, she was now squeezing the two headed dragon of the rotten tree. Changing her form once again into a full metal body, she signaled her master.

{"Master, now!"}

Asuka threw a crystal with the gift of fire, and shook her wind-cutting flute.

A sound similar to a bell resounded in the air.

A second later, the crystal turned into a massive concentration of heat and burned down the rotten tree. Originally, it was a simple gift of fire, but by expanding its spiritual power, it momentarily gained the destructive power comparable to hell fire.

The flames ran about that the dragon 's forest, hitting the edge of the mountains, and made a giant hollow.

"GEEEYAAAaaa!!!!"

Having its entire body split in eight, the two headed dragon of the rotten tree crumbled away.

After crying its death throws, the dragon returned to the earth, and moved no more.

"I…….did it……..!"

Breathing heavily, Asuka swiped her shining sweat, and savored the taste of victory. Winning against the opponents main force this dangerously close to defeat was a first for Asuka.

(*So this is "Shrine Craft"….I didn't think it would go this well with just the Gifts I had on hand. If I included Deen and Melin, I might be able to bring out an amazing power……!*)

The dart fairy Melin, the Sacred Rare Iron doll Deen, and the Celestial Beast of the Mountain Goat, Almathea.

If fit together, a game play that was never done before may be possible.

From the burned area, Almathea returned. Clopping her hooves, she gave Asuka praise while her wool smoldered.

{"Its a complete victory. Congratulations, Master. You did well against that dragon…….To tell the truth, I thought Master was more of a good for nothing girl."}

"…… Not saying those kind of words and keeping them in your heart would make you a better servant."

Holding her hand to her hips, she sighed.

At that exact moment, a radiating light filled the giant ridge.

The heat that blew from afar reached Asuka, and the after radiance pierced through her eyelids.

Asuka hid her eyes with her hand, and looked toward the ridge.

“This light…….is Izayoi’s……..!”

She had only seen it once, but this light was the same one that had slayed the giant dragon. The immeasurable light radiated out of Little Gardens roof and absorbed the light of the stars.

The clashing of two powers faded fast, and night returned to the forest once more.

{“…….I’m Surprised. To think against Azi Dakaha, he was still fighting…..!”}

“Izayoi-kun……..!”

He’s still alive. Izayoi is still fighting. That reality lit her face brightly.

Asuka gripped the flute she held, “The Wind-cutting Flute of Hamelin”, and asked

"…….Alma. I can fight. With this we'll go to Izayoi and help"

{"Its impossible. Its the same as committing suicide."}

An immediate answer. Almathea's voice showed that she was not moving on this matter.

{"If anyone can help him, it would be those in the Divine Army; the communities made out of war gods. If they start to move, then Azi Dakaha will be sealed again. What we can do right now is pray that the Divine Army will mobilize soon."}

"…….Can they be trusted? These gods in the Divine Army."

{"Of course. They are experts in hunting the ancient Demon Lords that Floor Masters cannot handle. With the 12 Devas leading, they are a group of war gods gathered from different mythologies. Around this time, the " Aristocrats of Little Garden" should be reporting to Taishakuten."}

—eh? a surprised voice was raised.

"Alma. That…… What do you mean?"

{“Its as I said. The privilege to mobilize the Divine Army belongs to “Aristocrats of Little Garden” alone. In their headquarters, Moon Shadow City, there’s an Astral Gate used exclusively by the Divine Army called the Touriten, and from there—”}

“The “Little Garden Aristocrats” were annihilated 200 years ago.”

……..?

—Almathea tilted her head.

Upon hearing these unbelievable words from Asuka, her thoughts most likely stopped. Although they were only a short acquaintance, this action must be rare from her, Asuka thought.

After a moment of halted thinking…The mountain goat, regaining consciousness, bit Asuka’s cloth and hurriedly ran.

{“W, why didn’t you tell me something that important sooner!”}

"But its been 200 years! You'd think it would be known!"

{"Please shut up! I have been asleep for over a millennium! How would I know such detail!"}

Of course. Until yesterday she was just a fleece. She wouldn't know of the details occurring in the world.

{"This is bad…….! This is the worst possible scenario, Master! If the Touriten can't be used, that means the Divine Army will mobilize independently from the 12 Devas!"}

"Is that bad?"

{"Its the worst! Depending on which war gods are mobilized they can be more ill natured then Azi Dakaha! If its the Greek gods or the Norse gods, then I still have some authority, and there is a chance of salvation, but……If the Slav gods or the Angels are summoned it would be the end; we may be obliterated along with the entirety of the North…….!"}

Wha, Asuka loses her words. That would be putting the cart before the horse.

In order to destroy the demon lord, they would burn down the towns along with the demon lord.

"What the……..They can't be sane!"

{"It can't be helped. Some war gods and angels are basically war machines without any will. Fight and win, do those two and everything is well. They are that kind of existence……!"}

"Even if they did those things, they can't defeat that three headed dragon, right?"

Against Asuka's retort, Alma listlessly nodded.

{"……..Yes. Even if they sacrifice a region of land, all they can do would be to seal it."}

"Despicable. My faith in gods are dropping."

She said those words in the coldest way possible. There was a mountain of other things she wanted to say, but right now was not the time for it. If what Alma said was true, they had to retreat from the North immediately .

(*But…….in that case, Izayoi……!*)

He was still fighting on that giant ridge.

He was still alive.

But as his comrade, she couldn't even aid him…..!!

{"Master's feelings are painfully understandable! But please only think of running right now! If the mobilized Divine Army are my comrades of Olympus, they would definitely save him……!"}

"……."

With frustration, with shame, with remorse, Asuka felt like she was going insane.

Even so, she had to forcefully convince herself.

At best, this was what she could do within her power.

Part 2

—The battle fought by Kasukabe Yō was, from start to finish, entirely one-sided.

She was fighting against two cloned dragons, but her enemies nails never even reached her.

Heart, skill, body, offense, defense, swiftness, and the Gift she possessed.

In every aspect, Yō utterly out-performed the two headed dragons, and obliterated her enemies in no more than a minute.

Watching this overwhelming strength, the refugees stared at Yō as if looking at some abomination.

“Wow…..”

“That human, really defeated those dragons…..!”

“That……is that really the strength of a human?”

The fire dragon squad, as well as Mandra, who received a shocking report, was dumbfounded by the strength of the Garuda wielded by Yō.

But the human in question, Yō, was in no shape to be concerned of such things.

“Gu, hurts…….!”

Holding back her pain, she breathes heavily. But there was no damaged given by her opponent.

The released flames of the Great Garuda blocked physical attacks as well as the inferno breath released by the dragons. What sapped her strength was not the damage she received from enemy attack.

The flames of Garuda that she had released herself, drained her vitality.

“Y, Yō-san. Thats too reckless…….!”

The flames not only burned through her enemies, but also burned her flesh.

Her white skin was burned black, and her fingers spasmed from the pain. It was obvious to the eye that the power well over her body’s limit was eating away her strength.

“But…….If it’s just this, than there’s no problem. Wounds can heal, and I can deal with the pain…….!!”

But; If one dies, life is over.

Having conversed with animals, and even lived with them for a time, Yō knew the cruelty of the world.

Farm animals knew that they were raised to be eaten. They knew the reason they were fed was because their meat will feed humans.

For a human living after the year 2000, knowing how to talk to animals was not a fortunate skill. Rather, a normal person would have gone insane.

The weak are meat, the strong shall eat. Both will and life are up for forfeit.

This way of living was still present even after she crossed the boundary of the world.

Because she knew all of this, Yō adapted to Little Garden quickly.

Because she knew those things, she also knew what she had to do right now.

(*That light from before……..That was Izayoi's Gift…… In that case, I can still make it….!*)

She gripped both of her burnt hands. Intense pain can be overcome by bonds and will power.

But, there are some walls that cannot be overcome by those things.

“Eh…….?”

Without any prior notice, the transformed Genome Tree returned to its form as pendant. Without being able to even fly, Yō fell down. Willa, in mid-air—

“Wahpu!”

—couldn’t catch her. Slipping through her arms, Yō tumbled out from Willas cleavage. In the dangerous situation, she was saved by Deen, who caught her.

“Yō. Are you ok?”

“U, Uhn Thanks. But why did it suddenly…..”

She unnaturally stopped mid-sentence. Willa looked at her in worry.

Yō stared at her lower body, shocked. She looked at it as if she could not believe what was happening, and also stared at the cold truth behind this outcome.

“…….My legs, won’t move.”

“Eh?”

“M, my legs won’t move……..! They can’t even twitch! Why at this timing!?”

She raised a panic stricken voice. This situation was much worse than just her hands being burnt.

Suddenly, coming to a realization, she stopped. Trying to deny her own theory, she tried listening to her surroundings.

Concentrating on her five senses, she tried observing her surroundings, but she could only gather the amount of information that a normal human was capable of.

“The Gift……the powers, are gone……!?”

Yō’s face suddenly turned pale. This wasn’t just caused by a physiological change.

Her body began to lose its strength.

(*No……..! I was prepared for any other risk, but this alone can't happen……!*)

Coughing, she fell down. From her eyes, tears of frustration fell.

From Greya's words, Yō thought that the risk of her Genome Tree was turning into a monster. But in reality, it was the opposite. The price of power higher than she could handle was the disappearance of the Gift and her bonds.

"I can't help Izayoi with this…….With my friends gone……I, I……!"

The things she had achieved, crumbled without a sound.

The legs her father had given her.

The friendships that crossed species.

The bonds she nurtured crossing the world, all returned to nothingness.

"—Ku, Ha, Hahahahahahahahaha!!! Well well, thats a situation I never thought of! It seems like the price of that power was larger than expected!"

Ah, Yō and Willa raised their heads. The two remembered the sound of that laughter mixed with sarcasm.

At that moment, Maxwell Demon Lord appeared while exuding hot air and cold air.

"When you weaponized the powers of the Great Garuda, it filled me with dread, but…….kuku. I didn't think there was that kind of price to pay. It seems as though the Heavens are cheering on my romances."

Holding his face with his right hand, Maxwell's face held a dark smile.

Willa trembled at the sight of that creepy smile, but now was not the time to fear. Holding on to her trembling legs, Willa stood between him and Yō.

"Maxwell, I won't lose this time…….!"

"Ooh, please don't misunderstand me, my bride. I haven't come here to fight. In your critical situation, I have simply come to escort you away."

"Gross!"

"Haha, I'm glad you're happy!"

Willa immediately retorted. Maxwell wasn't listening.

But no matter how drunk he was on lust, this demon lord was still a dangerous existence. Today, especially, his eyes shone with madness.

"Willa. I reflected on my past behavior. It's true that I have been giving you too many presents. As a result, you naturally couldn't come back to my side honestly. I think I've improved enough to understand that."

"Gross!!"

"So I started thinking in earnest. Thinking how you could come back to my side without being so bashful….. Yes, until now, there were reasons why you couldn't come to me. So I thought backwards."

He raised his right hand to shoulder height.

Watching that action, Willa and Yō made their resolution.

—But, Maxwell's perverse actions went above their expectations.

"In other words, a situation that would force you to come to my side. I just had to create such a situation!"

Snap! He flicked his fingers. At the same time, a pillar of fire rose in a distance.

It wasn't that far away from the streets. It was probably somewhere near the end of the streets.

Noticing what this signified, the two girl's blood ran cold.

"At the end of the streets….. No, It can't be!?"

"You broke the Astral Gate!?"

"Haha, exactly! The next Astral Gate was……How many thousand kilometers away?"

Maxwell laughed maniacally. Normally, even if the person was a demon lord, they would avoid destroying an Astral Gate. Destroying a Gate was basically the same as dumping a plot land into outer space.

But this reasoning did not apply to Maxwell Demon Lord.

Being able to teleport, he had no use for the existence of an Astral Gate in the first place.

"Fufu……Than, let's negotiate, Willa. If you say that you will be my bride, with my power, I will save the refugees and your friends."

"!"

So thats what he'll offer, the two thought as they grinded their teeth.

In this situation, the refugees and [No Name] were already in a checkmate. In order to evacuate, the only option was to listen to what Maxwell said.

(*Darn it……..Out of all the possible outcomes, this is the worst…….!*)

And, the timing was horrible.

Yō had lost her powers, and there was no telling when Azi Dakaha would be coming. If they even suggested that they would refuse his offer, Maxwell would definitely abandon everyone in the city.

After all, Willa, who was able to teleport, could simple run away alone.

(*What should I do……!? What can I do!!?*)

Chapter 4

In the distance, a roar resounded.

Buried under a pile of rubble, Izayoi woke up to the sound of the beast.

"…….I'll say so about myself, but I sure am sturdy."

Keho, he coughed blood. It was evident that he was injured all over his body. Rather, his condition begged one to count what part of his body wasn't injured. His sense of pain was already numb, and his blood flowed freely.

All the bones in his body and the muscles in his body were minced.

The fact he was alive in this condition was almost comical.

"……I lost, huh."

{"Aah. You lost, human"}

Basaa, Azi Dakaha spread his wings and landed. It also did not battle unscathed. The tip of its arms and legs

were dripping with blood because of the last impact, and he was losing a horrid amount of blood.

The difference between his condition and Izayoi's, however, was that none of his injuries were fatal.

"Tch…….the hell. You're pretty much unscathed."

{"Of course. Our powers canceled each other out. The fact that you are still alive can only be explained that way ."}

Is that so, he muttered uninterestedly.

But surprisingly, it wasn't a bad feeling to be defeated.

He had completely lost, but it was a fight without regrets. He did what he could, and he chose every method available.

If he couldn't win, it simply meant that he was lacking.

"Mah……I bought some time. If its Ojou-sama and Kasukabe, they'd be able to run somehow. They're not the type of women that would die just by sending three lizards."

Embracing the sky, Izayoi listlessly sighed.

Like a fish that submitted to its fate on a chopping board, he silently offered his body.

Azi Dakaha watched Izayoi's stance and laughed.

{"I see. So three is not enough, you say……..Fufu, thats superb. It seems the gushing blood is not going to be wasted."}

—What? Izayoi lightly lifts his head.

Izayoi, who was embracing the night sky, finally realized the situation surrounding him.

Because of the two's clash, over half of the giant ridge was gone. But that was not the issue.

The crimson eyes that glowed in the dark of the night.

The numbers did not end with ten or twenty. Just by lightly lifting his head, Izayoi could see that hundreds of crimson eyes shone in the night.

"……..Hah. This seriously is a bad joke, damn it……! If this many Divine beings went wild, the lower floors would be annihilated…….!"

{"It would indeed. That would be amusing in its own way."}

Azi Dakaha coldly said with no modulation in his voice.

But that one word lit a flame of anger in Izayoi's hedonistic spirit.

"Amusing….you said? Hah, Stop joking, you shitty dragon. If you say it in a voice that isn't amused, no one would be convinced…….!!!"

Rightening his body, he glared at Azi Dakaha.

The strength to fight was already depleted.

So Izayoi challenged Azi Dakaha with condemnation.

"Azi Dakaha— The pure god of evil. What is your purpose?"

{“……..”}

“Don’t play coy with me you shitty dragon……!!!! If you say the word amusement, then you have clear desires or goals! Then what are they!? Like other demon lords, some selfish, ego logistical reason; you have one! Am I wrong!?”

Under the circumstance where there would be no wonder if he was killed at any moment, Izayoi used all his strength and asked.

This was the final condemnation of a man who had lived as he pleased.

“If…….If your goal was to simply destroy, then fine. If we compared our desires, tried to kill each other over our ideals, and I lost, that would be digestible. But you're different! Even when you fought this hard, and you destroyed so much, you aren’t satisfied! You probably won’t be satisfied if you killed me after either! Then where is your motive, your desire…..Where is your Justice!!!!”

Ignoring the blood that flowed out of his body, Izayoi yelled freely.

If he didn't, he felt like he couldn't die in peace.

This demon lord would most likely destroy Little Garden to oblivion later on.

The roots of the giant tree, the town that was dyed in sunset, and the downtown district that held the [No Name] headquarters.

The things that Izayoi held dearly without reserve, the dragon would destroy everything thoroughly without any distinction.

—He was honestly mortified that he couldn't protect it all.

If his opponent was a destroyer without a conscience, then he would be able to give up.

Like a storm, like a tsunami, like a rain of lightning, if the dragon would befall everything in the world equally, he would be able to digest it.

But Azi Dakaha was different.

Even after it destroyed everything, it still had a goal and a conscience.

"This is Sakamaki Izayoi's……..last inquiry in his life. Answer, demon lord Azi Dakaha. What is the meaning of the "evil" you carry on your back……..!!!!"

The demon lord of the Black Death desired revenge against the sun.

The demon lord of the Vampires desired to purge her clan.

He asked the dragon that was sung as the demon of all demon lords, its desires, and its reason.

{"So you ask where lies my Justice…….eh"}

You're a human that amuses me to no end, laughed Azi Dakaha. To answer the inquiry, it gathered its energy into its fist.

The three heads and six eyes each looked in different directions, and embraced the sky.

Its crimson eyes reflected beyond the nebular cloud, and held an air of serenity.

While its figure was no doubt a monster, it looked very solemn.

"This body has crushed everything its eyes beheld ever since its birth. Life, cities, cultures. Societies, achievements, order, crime, public evil, proud justice and hideous depravities. Like a storm, like a tsunami, like a rain of thunder, this body has bared its fangs against everything in existence equally. But I…….am not a " natural disaster". I am a being that wields the destructions that only a natural disaster should be able to wield, with a single will, and destroys anything by his impulses. That can no longer be called a natural disaster. Inevitably my being, the single word of evil I carry, is the final destination for all hero's to cross……!"

Azi Dakaha's eyes shone clearly.

The red flag that had "evil" etched into fluttered harshly.

Carrying the unparalleled word on its back, the demon lord opened its six eyes on three heads and declared

"Rise……Over my dead body is where Justice lies……!!!!"

Like when somebody took a radiant sword to defeat the demon lord.

With its own death, it would declare “the justice of victory”.

The dualism of good and evil becoming the first trial humans must face, Azi Dakaha stood against the world.

“……So, that’s it.”

So that’s what he fights for. Izayoi listlessly embraced the sky.

In those eyes that held the abundant stars, there was no will to fight left. The inquiry that he had come up with using his life was answered by an unshakable resolve.

—Using its own life to show what is evil, and using its own death to pave the path of good.

The supposedly opposite and clashing dualism, was being proven by its very life.

The word "evil" it carried on its back was the symbol of its resolve to fight until the promised end. It was none other than the proof that it would not run from the active virtue and sinful evil. Carry out the ideology it was made

by without doubt, the monster's back showed the same awe-inspiring light as the saints that carried about their teachings.

"Hah……..I give up. I give up. I was the one that was supposed to be condemning, but I ended up being the one condemned. Shit, even losing in a battle of speech; how lame can I get?"

But that was fine. He got the answer he wanted. And he found what he had searched for.

The best treasure that he had searched and searched and searched for ever since he was summoned to Little Garden.

Concentrating all his remaining energy that could vanish in a moment to his fists, Izayoi delightedly began to run.

"So……you are the Demon Lord, Azi Dakaha!!!!!!!!"

He had no tactic. But he also had no fear. What he had was the excitement that bounced in his heart.

The young man that had ran around Little Garden bare fisted, focused all his remaining energy to his

clenched hands and ran toward the final trial that stood before him.

The Off-topic Gossip

—A slightly long time ago

Two weeks has past since the [Underwood] Harvest festival.

The news that Shiroyasha was going to retire as the Floor Master spread through Hakoniwa like wildfire. The news that spread as fast as light reached the ears of those who held grudges against her, and an army tens of thousands haters gathered.

But for the strongest Floor Master, there was no retreat .

Facing off against the army of evil, Shiroyasha accepted all of their challenges.

But……

“Tei!”

“GGGGGUUUUUUUUUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA WERE FINISHEEEEEEEDDDDDDDDDD!!!!!”

After a swing of her sleeve, the results were given.

Shiroyasha, furious of the weak challengers,

“Eei, this won’t even make a pre-party entertainment for the farewell party! Isn’t there anyone stronger than this lot!?”

—So, the sudden “Shiroyasha-sama and gang’s; The evil hunting tour” was announced.

She worked with enthusiasm before she would have to leave the lower floors.

“Hah……You really don’t change, Shiroyasha-sama.”

Nnn~! Kuro Usagi stretched her rabbit ears while sitting over a desk.

On top of her desk, months worth of [No Name]s activity records were neatly arranged. They were also documents related to Shiroyasha’s retirement.

By showing how much Shiroyasha has positively influenced the lower realms as a Floor Master, it was an

activity that attempted to quicken her reinstatement as the Floor Master.

"But even though this was all gathered……How should I say this, it just seems like a report that sums up how much trouble the Problem children are causing."

She looks blankly at the wall.

The activity records of the problem children……..In other words, the record of Kuro Usagi's hardships as the chief care-taker. Months worth of being flung this way and that way.

Who ever first stated the words Time flies, well said. The days went by very quickly.

"……..If Shiroyasha-sama was not there, us [No Names] would not have existed. With hopes of her fast reinstatement, Kuro Usagi shall write this with flaming passion!"

Mun, putting energy to both her arms, she raised her rabbit ears.

But she put too much energy, and the documents scattered to the floor.

"Wa, wawawa……..!"

In a panic, she started picking up the the papers and putting them back.

At that time, the title of the document caught her attention.

"Underwood activity records……? Nunu, what is this? "

She skimmed through it. As for when it was recorded, it was likely a few days before the Harvest Festival. It was a report of a time Kuro Usagi was still at Community Headquarters.

A different member most likely had wrote and organized this report.

"……Now should be ok to take a break."

Chira, she checked to see that no one was nearby.

Later today was also Shiroyasha's farewell party. It should be alright to end her work for today.

Kuro Usagi took the tea leaves that were grown from the garden, and sat herself on a seat.

The quiet time before the farewell party.

Kuro Usagi decided to read the activity log of the problem children that she didn't know about.

A Tea Gathering

Part 1

"—Izayoi-chan. This is the wind that blows in your current era, the modern age alchemy……!"

Part 2

—-[Underwood], VIP Quarters. Individual room for Sakamaki Izayoi.

It was nightfall. Having awoken from a dream of his past, Izayoi couldn't help but smile bitterly.

"Ha…… That was quite a nostalgic dream."

The roaring of the waterfall must have reminded him of that memory. The sound of the waterfall's continuous churning into the river's flow at the tree roots permeated the walls of this VIP room that was hollowed out from a large Tree Branch.

It must have taken quite a bit of work to have the sound tuned to a comfortable intensity to the ears and to

be a merry churning sound similar to a lullaby. There simply cannot exist a more perfect use of the Huge Water Tree's pulsation than this.

Listening to the orchestra of running water that was playing a lullaby, Izayoi reminisced his past while turning his body, as he lay upon the straw bed, to stare emptily at the carved wood roof above him.

—— It has been a week since he defeated the Huge Dragon.

Due to the tough victory of the [Draco Greif] and [No Name]s, they were unable to resume the hosting of the Harvest Festival; hence, it was postponed for a period of time for rest and recovery.

In recognition for the achievement of repulsing a Demon Lord, the Underground City of [Underwood] have been receiving many disaster relief supplies as well as Communities who have come forth to help with the relief efforts. If this pace of progress were to continue, the re-hosting of the Harvest Festival and the inauguration ceremony for the [Floor Master] might be possible in half a month.

To help out for a speedier re-hosting of the Harvest Festival, the [No Name]s have also remained in [Underwood]. Having made their name with the business of “Handling all sorts of trouble related to Demon Lords” , they officially accepted the commission from [Draco Greif].

However, Izayoi had only happily participated in the initial two days before handing all the trivial work over to Kudou Asuka and Kasukabe Yō.

“……,”

To prevent any misunderstandings, I would like to clarify it a little. Izayoi isn’t repulsed by the idea of working on the relief efforts.

As suggested by Sala, the project to crystallize the water tree sap was an amazing sight to behold. The process of melding timber together to form a crystalline waterway with a translucent quality was simply an eye-catching and jaw dropping scene that would have filled anyone with wonderment and joy.

After all, it is a unique construction technique reserved to the world of Little Garden where Gifts were plentiful.

The task to over the reconstruction efforts of the were-beasts and Eudemons, which utilizes both the classical and the avant-garde approach, it would never be a bore. Instead, it would was a refreshing sight capable of inducing a joyous palpitation in anyone's heart.

"……Aahh. So, that's why I've started to think of my past."

Turning a one-eighty on the straw bed, Izayoi had a knowing smile as he seemed to have figured out the reason to something.

Completely awake, he was just thinking about rolling around on the bed for a while when small knocks of *kok kok* came from the room door.

"Um…… Izayoi, are you still awake?"

"Aahh, is that Kasukabe? The door isn't locked."

Lying on his back Izayoi invited the other person to enter.

Kasukabe's face peeked in, opening the door to the size of a crack before pushing it fully to enter Izayoi's

guest room with a tensed expression. And in her hand, was a small package.

Seeing Yō's expression, Izayoi immediately figured out the reason for her visit.

(……*Is this about the headphones incident?*)

It felt like a long time since that incident, he thought to himself as he rubbed his hair that stuck out stubbornly.

In the high humidity of [Underwood], his bed-hair was really troublesome, which would stick out in a mess from his head, just like a lion's mane. The headphones were a tool used to clamp down the hair that stuck out…… In other words, there was no other reason for that item that can be more important than that. But, every time his gaze met with Kasukabe's, she would always have that atmosphere and reaction of walking away as if she had just seen someone she wanted to avoid. In fact, her actions for this whole week could only be said to be very troubling indeed.

His good mood was affected by those reactions, but listening to the reasons offered by the defendant is also the obligation of the victim. So he propped himself up to put on a lofty expression.

"So, what's the matter, at this time?"

He asked unceremoniously.

Yō sat on the ground in a seiza[18] position. Her expression was much more tense than normal, anyone would have been able to see how nervous she was then.

"Well….. Because of various matters that kept me busy , it's a little later than intended. Actually, Izayoi's headphones are destroyed during the invasion of the Titans,"

"Oi, the sequence of events are messed up. Start off with the reason for it being taken."

Oh, Yō shrank in her seiza position.

Izayoi wasn't angry, but he only wanted the events to be told in a chronological order. ……But according to her , it really was destroyed after all.

To prevent any misunderstandings, I would like to clarify it a little. Izayoi isn't hung up about the

headphones. But, it was just the passing though that "My hair wouldn't stay down if I don't have headphones" as he continued to listen to Yō's sequence of events.

The incident of Calico Cat's theft.

The incident of the Titan's attack on the Harvest Festival.

And about the time that it was crushed under the collapsed dormitory.

Listening up to that part, Izayoi gave a bewildered sigh.

"……that sure makes you unfortunate to the point of dispelling any ill-feelings anyone can have against you."

"Is, is that so?"

"Aahh. If it were the usual case, there would never be so many coincidences that would follow to that extent. From what I hear so far, I do not think that it is your fault at all, Kasukabe." Izayoi said, intending to wrap up the whole topic as quickly as he can.

But Yō simply shook her head.

"That is not acceptable. The responsibility is mine. As the owner of Calico Cat, to simply end this incident would not be good for our relationship. As one who lives under the same roof, it is only right for me to display the minimum necessary etiquette as a member."

……Uu, It was Izayoi's turn to look at Yō clearly.

Izayoi finally caught on to the reason for Yō's anxiety.

He did not expect to hear the words of "The responsibility is mine" to come from a girl who did not show much care about the things that happened around her. Although it was just a little, he did admire that resolve.

Yō mustered her momentum to push on with the topic.

"In addition, I've also heard from Leticia that those headphones were something made by a member of Izayoi's family. Then, it should be more so for me."

"Heh? If you put it that way, you sure did spend quite some time before coming to apologize, didn't you?"

Yō shrank even further as Izayoi teased her.

"That is because…… it took quite a bit of effort to prepare as well as to set my resolve."

"Prepare?"

"Mhm. To prepare an item to substitute the headphones. But due to a moment of carelessness, I've lost it then. ……To find that item, time passed and it was delayed for a week."

Yō's gaze suddenly became distant. Although the explanations have been left out quite a bit, but the problem was more than what meets the eye. The nekomimi headphones, which she had summoned, had already been found amongst the rubble of the Ancient Vampire City, safely intact. Yō had been very excited upon learning of its recovery, but after hearing word from Leticia about the story behind the headphone, the situation changed.

Leticia, who had heard the whole story of the theft and the nekomimi headphones, had looked at her with a disquieted expression while hugging her arms at her chest.

"……About those headphones, I think it would be better, no, absolutely do not give it to him."

"It's, It's just as I thought right?"

"Aahh. Although I cannot guarantee about it…… it would be an irreparable mess if you were to anger him."

"Is that so. Mhm, Izayoi looks really scary when he flies into rage."

—-Hm? Leticia gave a baffled look.

But it seems that she did not have objections to the decision of "not giving it to him".

Moreover, an idea of "Izayoi who likes to use nekomimi headphones" is a picture that is hard to imagine. It would be better not to douse more oil over the fire by keeping it from him.

"In the end, although I couldn't prepare something to use as a replacement……but to delay it indefinitely would also be rude. So, I hope to compensate for it in this upcoming Harvest Festival…… Is that okay?"

Yō tilted her petite head.

Izayoi had a bitter smile that was a mix between surprise and admiration.

“Since you’ve considered about it that carefully, I will not have any objections. …… but Kasukabe, are you the kind to be so polite? According to my impression of you, you are a little more inconsiderate than this.”

“Mhm. Now, I’m in the process of my own self-reformation and will deny any praises. So, please look forward to the new me.”

Bishi! Giving a thumbs up, puffing up her chest and lifting her chin.

What is that? Izayoi controlled his urge to burst into laughter.

Part 3

“Actually, there’s also another matter.”

Yō relaxed her legs as her mind was now at ease after the topic of the headphones came to a close and the small parcel bought into the room was placed before her .

Within the small parcel was a golden yellow fruit and a red fruit which were purchased from the Harvest Festival.

“Although I’ve talked to Asuka before…… but it feels like we really do not know much about each other. Moreover, the three of us did not try to talk about those things right?”

“Mah, we have only known each other for three months after all. It is difficult to describe us as old acquaintances, right?”

“Nn. So tonight, we have the purpose of deepening our bonds and becoming harmonious in our relations. I think Asuka should also be coming over soon after preparing some kōcha[19].”

Just as Yō ended her words, the voice of Kudou Asuka could be heard from the other side of the door.

“Are you guys finished with your talk? I’ve brewed some kōcha, would you like to have a little break?”

“Ojou-sama, you’re just in time”

“Mhm, but my hands are full with the plates at the moment, could you help me open the door?”

"**Don’t wanna!!!**"

“Is that so? Thanks.”

… … … … .

… … … … … .

… … … … … … .

“—-Are you guys finished with your talk? I’ve brewed some kōcha, would you like to have a little break?”

“Ojou-sama, you’re just in time”

“Mhm, but my hands are full with the plates at the moment, could you help me open the door?”

“Okay.”

The aroma of kōcha wafted lightly into the room as Yō opened the door.

Asuka must have mixed in other spices bought from the Harvest festival in this brewed tea. Even Yō, who wasn't familiar about kōcha, could tell that this was of high quality.

However, for the person in question who had brought the kōcha over, Asuka, was had her veins popping at her forehead even while maintaining her smiling composure.

"What's wrong, Kasukabe-san? If I continue to stand here in the corridors, this quality kōcha will turn cold and it would be such a waste. So, would you hurry up and get out of the way?"

"O…Okay."

Looks like someone got the time for jokes wrong there.

Asuka strode into Izayoi's room and sat herself daintily on the chair that came with the furnishings of the guest rooms. Having placed the kōcha on the table, Asuka exchanged a glance with the two of them,

"Then, let's start the first party among us Outlanders." [20]

Oohh~, *Pak Pak*, Asuka and Yō started to clap.

Although Izayoi was bewildered at the girls' team who had barged into his room to start this commotion, looking on the behalf of the good choice in kōcha and snacks, he decided to restructure his thoughts and accommodate their behavior for now.

"Mah, I'm alright with having this sort of thing being held in rooms other than your own, but since the hosts were by the girls' team, I'll be leaving the arrangements for the proceedings to you girls."

"Of course. The topic has already been decided."

"Mhm. The first topic of this party——I guess it should be "the perspectives of our own era"."

……Hueh? Izayoi gave a small cry in surprise.

Coming to terms with the suggestion that far exceeded his expectations, Izayoi couldn't help but feel his curiosity lighted within him.

Being a party which he had assumed to be a high school girl's standard of partying, it is no wonder that the unusual topic would pique Izayoi's interest.

"That's really unexpected. I thought that Ojou-sama and Kasukabe would not be interested in that sort of SF[21] topic."

"Nope, that's not true. When conversing with people living in different eras, wouldn't you feel that it's a very intellectual and amazing exchange?"

"Well, I'm not that interested. …… But from the vibes emitted from the two of you, I kind of get that I've been summoned from the distant future. And from the view that this could serve as a topic, I would believe that it is of some value."

Kasukabe Yō, who claimed to be from the future, smiled as she looked at them in turn.

Having figured that Izayoi and Asuka gave off the vibes of people from the past, the two who were reflected in Yō's eyes could very well be holding some commonalities.

"It's a rare opportunity, so let's start by the chronological order of our eras… …We will first start with Ojou-sama."

"I see."

Two pairs of eyes were then fixed upon Asuka.

—-Regarding Kudou Asuka, the others have only heard of her brief mention of being a "daughter[22] of a financial conglomerate". But one cannot be certain about the way of life that she led other than the information about her being from an era marked the end of battles after the Second World War. It would then seem interesting in a certain sense.

But contrary to their interest in her story, Asuka had averted her gaze in shyness.

"Well, the suggestion is quite good…… but I'm not too clear about the trends of my time."

"How is that so?"

"I remember mentioning it to you before, Izayoi-san. I've always been in the girls' dormitory. For me, the place that I've lived in is only my main house and the girls'

dormitory. So, with regards to the Japanese way of life after the war, I'm really not too sure about it."

Asuka gave a troubled laugh. A paradox of her name, she had been leading a life similar to a bird in a cage[23]. For her who had been living in a narrowed perspective of a closed off institution, this topic would be quite a challenge for her to present her available materials.

"It's very unfortunate that I won't be able to provide you guys with an interesting conversational material to start on. I can only provide information on things such as the Kudou family being one of the five greatest financial conglomerates or the rarely heard backdrop dealings for the maintaining of the conglomerate's existence."

"That actually sounds pretty interesting in its own way as well." Izayoi broke into a laugh.

But suddenly, Izayoi asked in a very concerned manner.

"……I say, Ojou-sama. The Kudou financial conglomerate, is it on a scale large enough to represent a Japanese financial conglomerate?"

"That's right, it seems to be the case. If even I, who am sickened by the association to my family, sees it in that way. Then it might be seen to be larger in scale to others."

"……Hueh?"

Tilting and bending his head down, Izayoi went into a pensive state.

Beside him, Yō raised her hand to pose a question for Asuka.

"Then, there's still another question. Is it true that females of the Shōwa period are not supposed to wear clothes that reveal anything above the knees? So there's no miniskirts and shorts?"

"Of course. Kasukabe-san and Kuro Usagi should be more mindful about keeping a maiden's sense of shame about these things."

The female representative of the Shōwa period dropped the sharp comment.

Putting aside the residents living in the humid climate of [Underwood], the scene of females of the peaceful East Side revealing their legs excessively was something that Asuka would have difficulty in understanding.

But Yō, who preferred to wear clothes that permitted ease of mobility, did not intend to change and allowed Asuka's words to brush pass her ears.

"Last question. From the perspective of a person from the Shōwa period, what do you think of the world of Little Garden?"

"I think it is a wonderful place. The water tree that grows astride the river and the residents who live in it. These are all things which would have been unimaginable in our world."

Asuka summed it up as that.

And Yō nodded her head in agreement.

But after hearing Asuka concluding it as such, Izayoi's expression was slightly pained.

"…… Ojou-sama. Those words just now, could it be an absolute term that encompasses everything in our world? "

"Mhm, Mhm, that's the idea of my words."

"Then I shall beg to differ. After all, although we definitely do not have a large tree that spans across a river's flow……but we do have things that are on par with it in our world."

Those words were seemingly said in an attempt to defend their homeland.

Truly, there did not exist a rule breaking miracle such as the Great Tree…… but there exists things of the same level and Izayoi's eyes were giving off a reproachful glare.

Even though Asuka knew about Izayoi's erudite side, a look of surprise was still present in her eyes upon hearing that.

"We have something as incredible as [Underwood] in our world?"

"Aahh. Though I may say so, it actually did not exist during Ojou-sama's era yet."

Asuka furrowed her brows at that. Then, how would I have known, was most likely the meaning expressed from her reaction.

Even Yō, who was munching away on a fruit, had tilted her petite head as she asked Izayoi.

"Did not exist yet, would that refer to a man-made structure? Like the Sky Tree[24] or something along those lines?"

"Absolutely not those. How can I compare those sort of things with this? To use it as a subject for comparison would be far too strange. Since we are using this Great Tree and its river as the subject of comparison, wouldn't it be strange if we didn't match it to a similar river landscape?"

The two others were gazed at each other as the queries continued to multiply in their heads.

Even their gazes were steadily clouded by doubt.

"…… That sort of thing, does it really exist?"

"Yes."

"Then it's your turn, Izayoi. Hope you will tell us more about that."

Yō readjusted her posture to display an attitude of attentive listening. Beside her, Asuka had also done the same.

Izayoi was a little hesitant but if he were to retreat now after bringing up the topic, it would not be off the mark to describe him as having lost the battle.

(*Although this would surely touch on stuff about Canaria… … Mah, I guess it doesn't matter.*)

Deciding on a direction and acting fast on it are merits of Izayoi's character.

Izayoi stared emptily at the ceiling, seemingly in his reminiscence about the past.

Part 4

—-What Izayoi had recalled as he recounted were his younger days when he had travelled with Canaria.

“Izayoi-chan, I shall take the opportunity to say this: Fun and fascinating stuff will not come to you by themselves. So you will have to go in search for them.”

Canaria, whose Konpeitō-like[25] hair swayed as she moved, had only puffed up her chest while saying lots of things that were nice to hear as she brought Izayoi out of Japan from that day onwards to tour the world.

……In retrospect, it sure is a memory of a journey that was totally random. At that time, the choice of destinations had been based on a whim and they would just journey to the country without a plan.

However, the initial destinations of the journey seemed to be a decision made by Canaria.

The first stop was at the South American continent. Moving along uncharted paths, the destination was to be the huge river which could serve as a national border.

Known to be the large in scale, the world’s three biggest waterfalls.

Niagara Falls, Victoria Falls and Iguazu Falls were collectively referred to as the world's three biggest waterfalls. And amongst them, the Iguazu Falls was known to be the largest in scale with a large waterfall prized for its magnificent view which is also known as the "Iguazu Devil".

The Great waterfall, which has several tonnes of water volume flowing down per second, was a power unfathomable to be shouldered by Man in addition to its fearsome form. Moreover, within the Iguazu Fall's plunge pool which is impossible to survive upon entering, Man have also found a mysterious existence which is termed in fearful reverence as —- the devil.

Part 5

"……That devil, is on par with [Underwood]?"

"No, that's not possible. It really is a grandiose sight but regarding this point, the Great Tree would still be in the lead. Moreover, I've leapt into the plunge pool to see for myself……but there wasn't anything that could even faintly resemble a devil."

Regarding Asuka's question, Izayoi squinted in disappointment as he continued his story.

Part 6

—-The "Iguazu Devil" had been Izayoi's first magical moment of witnessing a mystery of the stars after the meeting with Canaria. And that day's experience was surely be one that would be remembered for all his life.

The vastness of the world and the insignificance of his existence in comparison.

The sight that turned the tables for his haughty pride.

But what came into the sight of that young lad were the emerald shadows that flittered along the aquamarine river banks and the huge volume of water flow that seemed like the life source of the Stars that ran through the arterial channels. Its mystical value was a huge impact for Izayoi who had always grown up in the little garden known as Japan.

Even though he possessed a superhuman strength, Izayoi of that time was still just a ten year old lad.

Izayoi who still possessed the narrow and naïve perspective at that time, had experienced the magnificent and mysterious atmosphere surrounding the Iguazu Falls and that awoke a desire and hope within him.

Carrying the hope that there might be a possibility of an existence, a monster , whom he could fight on par with—- a “devil”.

But that first expectation carried by that young soul was completely shattered in the next moment.

Part 7

Within the deep abyss that was unmarred by the presence of Man, it was just a normal waterfall plunge pool even after the unwrapping of its mysterious cover.

The existence of the “devil” hidden within the Great falls had only taken a moment—-to leave Izayoi disappointed.

“……Huh? Could it be that my misfortune with water had started from that time onwards?”

"Eh?"

"Aahh, no. Nothing."

If he were to continue thinking in that direction, it might be possible that the memories of having his misfortunes with water would only come to the fore front of his mind and it was important for him to give priority to the topic of the party for now.

Part 8

Izayoi had leapt spiritedly into the pool but the feeling of disappointment was just as great. After surfacing from the waterfall, he did not even consider getting up to the river bank but allowed the Iguazu's flow to carry him downstream.

Floating like a withered drift wood carried by the flow of the river, Izayoi had floated all the way to the bank of the Paraná River's confluence[26]. Seeming to have foreseen this outcome, Canaria was seen to be sitting on a blue cloth in wait for his arrival.

Canaria tried to dry out the hair of the thoroughly soaked Izayoi with a towel from her bag while asking about his thoughts.

"How was it? Have you met the "Iguazu Devil"?"

……Aahh. The truth was really boring to the maximum.

"Ahaha—so it's just as I thought—how could the devil or something similar exist there right—?" Just after his irritated complain, the smelly obaa-san had cheerfully rubbed salt to his wounds.

Although Izayoi was still young, he wasn't a child who would daydream about fantasies. The sacredness felt by humans were only just illusions with a dab of cosmetics. That was something that he already knew from the beginning.

For Izayoi who possessed congenital talents gifted to him, he was more familiar about mysteries than anyone else.

"……"

Or maybe — it was precisely because of that that he aspired towards it. In any case, the “Devil” was proven to be non-existent. And just when he thought that “there’s no more reason for me to be in this place anymore”, and faced his back to the river —

“Then, let’s go see the real mystery.”

—what? Izayoi immediately let out that sound in surprise.

What came next was the main event and Canaria pulled Izayoi’s hand to start on the journey after saying those words.

Those words had really stumped him and he conceded to allow Canaria to pull him along.

Following the frothing river’s bank as they proceed, they walked upstream from the confluence.

During that time, the duo were repetitively praising the scenery’s beauty or commenting on the occasional

wild bird that they had not seen before and similar dialogues that had no nutritional value to it, while making their way towards the destination.

As the street lights began to come on one after another, Canaria pointed to them while posing a question.

"Izayoi-chan, what do you think about these street lights and those lights in the city?"

……?

"At first, I've disliked those very lights you know? These lights have hidden the atmosphere of the night time and blocked out the radiance of the stars. It has also defeated the fundamental unease that is supposed to come with the darkness. It's almost like a proclamation to all that colors only exist in the human communities."

"……"

Artificial light that flooded the world.

It wasn't a metaphor nor was it referring to anything else. As long as human history continues to be written, the radiance emitted from this planet would always be controlled by the humans. And that was incontestable. To which Izayoi agreed by nodding his head.

"Fufu. But that seems to be my shallow perspective. Even though I had intended to accumulate various

experiences, but my thoughts are still too shallow. …… Mhm. Humans sure are great.”

Canaria then cheerfully strode forth, while bobbling her Konpeitō-like head.

Canaria, who was elegantly dressed in her coat, led Izayoi to a place approximately thirty kilometers away from the Iguazu Falls— the Itaipu power plant.

Approximately eight kilometres along the Paraná River, the hydroelectric dam stored up several tonnes of water flow before a controlled release that led to the large amount of spray and mist emitted from the foot of the dam.

Canaria overlooked the dam from the shore and pointed towards the man-made gargantuan wall while letting out a laugh.

“Wuah! It’s really big and wide! Izayoi-chan, the top of this power station is a gargantuan wall that can’t be seen! ” Acting like an excited kid, she pointed towards the power station.

Gazing up at the huge man-made dam, Izayoi suddenly looked at his own two hands.

— The hands of humans, can actually construct such a huge object? “The Heavens cannot create another that stands above me”, Izayoi had used that sarcasm. But this structure had been constructed by that sort of humans had caused him to feel an unexpected lift in his heart that moved him to his core, which was much different than the feelings of seeing the Iguazu Falls and he couldn’t help clenching his fists.

This sort of technical expertise in technology was something that would not be obtainable from a sudden evolution in an “individual”. That was a testament of an accomplishment that was only possible from a “species”, Humans, who have exhausted the evolutions in the Phylogenetic Tree.

“Mhm. It’s much grander and satisfying than I imagined it to be. It really is purely astounding. To be able to create the radiance of civilization in this sort of place, there’s no harm giving them the acknowledgment right? Harvesting the fresh flow of the river and converting it into the radiance of the stars. Doesn’t it feel poetic?”

“……,”

The streetlights that were still visible from here.

The radiance that resided within the city streets.

The addition of all those where what Canaria described to be the radiance of the stars.

—The energy produced by the gargantuan wall, which looks like a towering cliff, is equivalent to ten times the amount produced by a nuclear plant. Converting thousands and millions of flowing water's kinetic energy into a massive amount of power. If one were to convert the powers flowing within the natural world into lights for the city's street lamps, and thus the radiance of the stars—

"—Izayoi-chan. This is the wind that blows in your current era, the modern age alchemy……!"[27]

Canaria was gazing at the man-made gargantuan wall while giving a narrative that seemed to portray her pride. Facing her back to the dazzling water scenery that danced in the backdrop, Canaria gave a smile that

seemed to be a silent blessing for the advancements of human kind.

Part 9

After completing his story, he clapped his hands once to signify the end.

"And as I've mentioned above, that is our Human's milestone of prosperity that does not lose to [Underwood]. ……So how is that? Even if it is just a rough description of it, it should already give the impression of being on par with this Great Tree water arena right?"

"……Uu, Mhm, Mhm."

Contrary to Izayoi's posture of raising his head while puffing up his chest, Asuka had given a muffled reply. It must have been the shock and disbelief that something like that would actually be constructed in the later eras.

Yō, who sat cross legged on the floor, had nodded her head meaningfully while muttering in a soft voice that couldn't be heard by the others.

"Is that so…… in Izayoi's era, the Itaipu relics were still operating."

"Mhm? Did you say something?"

"No, nothing. But come to think about it, Izayoi's foster mother seems to be quite a really spirited individual. It kind of make me want to meet her."

"I guess so. If it weren't for her, I would have been bored to death a long time ago."

"Is that so……? That really makes others envious of you. If I had been picked up by her, maybe I would have become like Izayoi-san and learnt about various stuff."

Asuka pouted her lips, seemingly in a little tantrum.

On the other hand, Izayoi only laughed loudly in reply .

— On a side note, the story mentioned earlier also has a continuation to it.

Izayoi who was greatly excited after that had his interest stimulated and blew apart the huge wall of the dam that was similar to a citadel. Obviously, that caused the power station to stop functioning and led to a power stoppage for a large portion of the country. The duo who have been termed as terrorists had quickly escaped the national borders and things up to here would be the completion of the story. But it would seem that this was omitted for this time.

"Lastly, we have finally come to the person of the future, Kasukabe to speak."

"Mhm. But it's quite late already."

"I guess that's true. We will also need to wake up early tomorrow, so let's end it at this for today."

Although it isn't visible from the VIP quarters, the moon had already risen to the zenith of the night sky.

It was also common sense that it wasn't good for two ladies to stay in a guy's room too late into the night.

"Come to think about it, what have you girls been up to?"

"Well, it isn't a big assignment. Although it is the acceptance of the request to go over to the construction, we are also unable to help out much at the place. So our main activity has been to act as lookouts for the Titans."

"Mhm. I usually scout at the region of sea trees, helping to harvest the fruits. After all there are still some remnants of Perytons and Demonic beasts and it seems quite dangerous."

Asuka and Yō had crossed their arms, hugging their chests, while looking troubled.

"Although Sala is still clearly in the process of recuperating, she continues to work without rest. Saying "There's still a threat even if the Demon Lord's game has ended, so how can I, as the representative lie here and rest?!" when she just got up."

"Even the Demonic beasts are a menace, acting similar to the time with Percher as well. Although the curse of

Black Death has been release, we had found a sizeable quantity of rats that can allow the disease to incubate in their bodies, right?”

- Hueh*, Izayoi gave a direct expression of surprise.

Thinking back about the matter, the old grudge of the Titans could also be counted as the aftershocks after the previous Demon Lord’s game. To be on the guard for the second or third wave of disasters would also be the responsibilities of the [Floor master].

“Come to think about it, the circus Community that we have fought in the past. Was that also another legacy left behind by the Demon Lord?”

“According to Shiroyasha, it would seem to be so. Similar to the grimoire of Hamelin, it was a stage that continues to function even after the defeat of the Demon Lord.”

“But that mobile circus was quite interesting as well.”

— It was roughly before the Harvest Festival.

Without a fixed Community territory and with just a mobile tent, the circus Community toured the lands of

Little Garden and arrived in the East Side. And with its arrival in the East Side that lacked entertainment, the circus troop had struck up a commotion.

In actual fact, it as a circular mobile arena that was used to draw audiences into participating in games.

“It would seem that that’s the only one that is still operational. If only all remnants were like that, it wouldn ’t get boring.”

“If those victims were to hear of it, they would definitely be in a rage. But I guess, I won’t deny that.”

Yō and Izayoi suppressed their urge to laugh as they nodded to each other.

Asuka gave a big yawn and covered her mouth in embarrassment. After her work in the day, it was about time for her drowsiness overtake her senses as well.

Drooping her shoulders as it was a pity to be ending so soon, she initiated the last topic.

“Then to wrap things up for tonight, let’s have Kasukabe-san talk on this topic. Please tell me a type of “ trend in Kasukabe-san’s era”.”

"……trend? Does it refer to clothes and such?"

"Although anything is fine, but it would be best if you could name a trend that would best give the imagery of Kasukabe as a person of the future."

Izayoi gave her one of his frivolous smiling gazes. It was a really mean move that embodied the notion of doubt on Yō's word to be from the future due to the lack of evidence.

Yō hugged herself as she thought carefully.

— A short and succinct trend that would be able to distinguish her era from the get go.

The difficulty of the topic was high but Yō's mind was clear tonight.

"……I got it. Then, would it be okay to be an accessory ?"

"Of course."

Asuka gave her approval.

Izayoi had also given a surprised nod.

"Good. Then,….I shall introduce you to the headphones that are all the rage in my era."

Hah? Izayoi couldn't help but allow a cry to escape from his mouth.

That reaction clearly indicated the doubt about headphones being able to become a trend, but Yō did not mind as she placed her hands above her ears—

"In my era—Usagimimi Headphones, is a trend throughout the world."

Bishi! The hands were made to represent rabbit ears.

The eyes of the other two were as round as saucers—and it wasn't long before there was an uncontrollable laughter filling the room.

Within the minds of those two, who were laughing to the point of having stitches on their sides, the same image was brought forth.

The same image was that of a world with plenty of people looking similar to Kuro Usagi, the symbol of dedication[28].

The other part was that regardless of the truth in Yō's words, if it were true that Usagimimi headphones ever became the trend of the era…

Then that would be a peaceful era and one that would be filled with laughter even if a chopstick were to fall off the table. That sort of ironic praise was also embodied within their hilarious outburst of laughter.

The laughter of Sakamaki Izayoi and Kudou Asuka resounded in the night from the Great Tree as the surface of the river continued to ripple.

Lily's Big Adventure

Part 1

— [TheUnderground City, Underwood], Eve of the Harvest Festival.

As time passed, it was three days prior to the rehosting of the Harvest Festival.

The [No Name]'s Senior Group were helping out with the hosting preparations as a favor for having extended the invitation of the Harvest Festival to them. And today, Lily, who was appointed as the commander for the Senior Group, was running errands in the Underground City.

Lily and Kirino were transporting a basket when a cool breeze swept through the Underground City, disturbing the Great Tree's branches and leaves in its passing.

"Kya!"

Due to the wind, Lily's kitsunemimi[29] were pressed against her head as she gave a startle cry in surprise. Pressing on her hair accessory which added a bonus to

her fine features, Kirino the dryad gave a laugh as she walked alongside Lily.

“The winds that blow down into [Underwood] are quite strong. Be careful ne, Lily.”[30]

“Mhm. Thank you, Kirino.”

*Beishi*Her kitsunemimi perked up. The duo carefully rearranged the messed up ingredients in the full basket before making their way towards the designated location for the ingredient delivery errand in their swaying smock-frocks[31]. The basket was filled with many cobs of corn and pumpkins that were contributed from individuals involved in the Harvest Festival. The fragrance of the freshly harvested corn from the fields made Lily’s spirit soar in happiness and her steps made a merry pitter patter on the pavement.

“The corn looks really delicious right~? Are we cooking it in the Harvest Festival or roasting it?”

“I heard that the night time stalls are going to roast it. They are to be grilled on the wire rack after the stripping

of the corn silk and husk. This is because Garol-Tairo[32] has said that the freshly harvested corn would surely be sweet and tasty."

"Is that so~? This really makes me look forward to the harvest festival~"

*Beishi*Her kitsunemimi perked up in joy.

Breaking into a run due to their uncontainable excitement in anticipation for the Harvest Festival, they quickly arrived at the location for the delivery.

—Despite the fierce assault of the Huge Dragon on [Underwood], the Harvest Festival is once again ready to be re-hosted, thanks to the nearby Communities who have come forth with materials for the relief and revival efforts. However, even though it is said to be nearby, but the next Outer Gate in this vast place called Little Garden would already be a world away. Due to that reason, it has also resulted in a non-uniform array of relief materials and food.

Take for example, in the water-rich place of [Underwood], wheat is both the staple food and the popular grain of production. But corn is a grain that

loves a drier climate and it is an ingredient that is only cultivated in small amounts in the neighboring lands. Then why would there be such a large amount found in the Harvest Festival?

That is because these ingredients were all harvested by a Community located three Outer Gates away, in the midst of the wilderness, and donated to the Harvest Festival of [Underwood].

Besides being a source of food, corn is a grain which could also be utilized as a source of oil. Therefore [Six Scars] had also signed a contract to import from the different donors. The other party would surely be happy as well about getting the new contracts.

Although it might seem like a devious plan to try taking advantage of another's plight to donate for the sake of engaging in commerce, the advantage of receiving such donations and having relations established with the other Communities of far off lands is much weightier in proportion. Hence, that is the agenda behind the delivering of donated relief items to Communities damaged by the wars with Demon Lords.

This is an indispensable wisdom for one to prosper in this vast world of Little Garden.

(*Ah, but what a pity. If only the fields of [No Name] were complete, we could have also provided scrumptious rice to the list.*)

Though Lily might have a merry skip to her steps, she was still a little disappointed that they missed a chance to make a debut in the Harvest Festival. After all, the food ritual that came in the form of the Harvest Festival was the best stage for them to showcase their daily efforts.

Being a Herald divine beast of the Uka God of grains, it was her truest wish to participate as a Host.

However, Lily immediately dismissed the thought as she clasped her hands together.

(*But, now I must hold it in. That sort of selfishness can wait and be done after repaying my debts to Izayoi-sama and Kuro Usagi Onee-san.*)

The farmlands of [No Name] had indeed started its recovery of fertility. Lily had once given up on it with the thought that the lands would not be usable ever again in her generation. However, it was a different matter now.

The fields of the [No Name] are likely to be capable of supporting a swaying golden yellow sea of grains in the following year.

"……HeHe"

"Is something the matter?"

"No, nothing. Let's quickly send the basket over…… Kyaah."

Thunk! It is not known who collided into her rear end and it caused the corn and pumpkins contained within the basket to fly and scatter on the road.

"Oh my, sorry Lily. I didn't notice where I'm walking. "

It was Sakamaki Izayoi, who stood at the place where the ingredients were to be offloaded.

Lily frantically picked the ingredients up and waved her twin tails while bowing her head.

“Sor, Sorry! It was me who did not notice you……"

“No, it’s okay. Just get the basket over quickly…… yeah?!”

"Izayoi-san why are you at the ingredient drop-off storage point?”

“Mhm~, just a little bored. It’s rare to have the opportunity to use any kind of ingredient so I was just entertaining the thought of whipping up a little something. It has been a long time since I last cooked after all.”

Saying that, he bit into the apple picked from the food storage, tasting to ascertain its flavor.

Lily widened her eyes in surprise.

“Iz, Izayoi-san can cook?”

“Oi. Although I have left the preparation of meals to you guys during my stay in Little Garden and did not have much chance to enter the kitchen, but I have been

living alone initially. Moreover, that old home of mine also had a cyclical shift system for the house chore of cooking. You could say that I've already done most types of house chores even when I was just a little brat."

Izayoi replied nonchalantly while looking through the mountain of ingredients for his selection.

In contrast, Lily's small mouth was agape as she stood in a daze. For the members of the [No Name] Senior Group, Izayoi was the main force of the Community and he was one of the key personnel of the hub that the Community was established around.

He, who could take on opponents on the level of Demigods and Deities to be actually capable of helping out in house chores? Lily was seriously taken aback.

"Izayoi-san…… Wouldn't you have felt unsatisfied by that sort of life?"

"What are you referring to?"

"I mean, Izayoi-san is a really amazing individual. Your strength is for the purpose of taking on beings on

the level of the gods, and not for handling only a kitchen knife. Yet, those people have simply asked you to handle the house chores and such……"

Lily's ears drooped as she puffed her cheeks.

From the "simply asked you to handle" phrase, it must have been a misunderstanding that Izayoi was forced into doing work that did not suit his capabilities.

Izayoi, who picked up on that underlying misunderstanding, couldn't help but to smile bitterly.

Although he did understand what Lily was trying to say, but it was a fact that the world of Little Garden and the Outside World came with a different set of cultural values. The structure of the societies were also vastly different.

In Little Garden, those with power were to depend on those without power to live. But that isn't everything. Even after winning lands or obtaining water sources, there was still a need to utilize the workforce effectively.

To be victorious in the face of battles with Demigods and Deities, only individuals who can utilize various Gifts are able to survive the encounters. And age and

strength did not matter. To effectively utilize the workforce of powerful individuals and the powerless. That would be the culture of the world known as Little Garden.

But it was different in Izayoi's world. Regardless of one's talents, children were to be brought up by adults and they would not learn how to be independent until they were out into the society. Even though compulsory education may include some pointers on living, it was still unable to equip one with the practical knowledge and skills. Especially in Japan where Izayoi had lived in, it was in an excess of material comfort where exceptional talents were easily substituted with modern equipment of the civilization. His personality that should have taken effect in the society was hence exposed to the atmosphere of decadence[33].

The era where evil deeds go unpunished.

The eager voices of the common man calling for equality.

Celebrating the equality of mankind when it is actually unable to have it achieved even in oneself.

Japan, the country that relies on the monitoring system amongst neighbors to successfully regulate crime and generate crime, he had already deemed it to be a boring place even before Canaria's arrival. "The civilians who hope for their ideal society (Utopia), but yet the civilians who create the management system in society (dystopia). It was truly a rare example."—And that was a nicely arranged and straightforward summary of the situation.

If Izayoi with his absurd talents were to be presented to the world in that sort of country, it is without a shred of doubt that he would be seen as a troublesome fellow. That is something that even Izayoi did not want to encounter.

After all his personality was one that was merciless towards his opponents. Regarding those puny weaklings that are influenced by the workings of the world to become his enemy, it would still be an inevitable ending even if he felt pity for them.

What made Izayoi to have no interest in the workings of the world, did not mean that he had an interest in bullying the weak.

It is only cool to use a great power against powerful foes.

"…… Aahh, no. It's not like that."

"Aye?"

Izayoi had said it in a way that made himself out to be humbled and he had to think up another way to explain it to achieve the imagery of a different perspective.

"It isn't like it was compulsory labour. It's just that the country that I'm from— Mah, we would use swords that can cleave mountains and rivers to peel apples and use fire that can incinerate forests to light a lamp. It is just a peaceful and prosperous place that would allow us to have these sort of meaningless splurge of resources.

Giving a loud "Wahaha" laugh, he then bit another mouthful of that ruby red apple. If it had been the warring eras like Asuka's time, Izayoi would have had a different future. However, these advantages were only deemed to be useless in his own time.

Lily’s eyes were getting wider by the moment but she seemed to have gotten the idea as she smiled and nodded .

“That really is…… a very peaceful country.”

“Aahh. It is only thanks to that, that my culinary skills were improved. …… So whatcha think? If you have any requests, I can put it together for you, you know?”

Finishing the apple, Izayoi smiled confidently.

Lily happily perked her kitsunemimi.

“If that’s so, I would like you to whip up a dish using the ingredients in this basket!”

“Heh~? Those items that you have just delivered?”

“Yes. They are corns, pumpkin, cherry eggs and there’ s also some cheese.”

Smilingly, Izayoi peered into the basket of ingredients. The large sized basket was filled with freshly delivered

ingredients and the one that drew the most attention would be the large and brightly colored eggs that were of the color of cherry blossoms.

“Hey, it’s cherry blossom colored eggs. Does it taste good?”

“Yes. It’s a type of bird egg from the Sakuramiru Bird that builds its nest on the cherry blossom trees. I heard that it is an egg that is frequently used in pies.”

“Huoh? Pies, eh?”

Giving the basket another cursory glance, Izayoi eyed the ingredients with a bewildered look.[34]

He then suddenly looked up with the expression of having recalled something.

“Pumpkins, Eggs and cheese. If there’s some bacon and wheat flour, I think I can whip up a Salty Pumpkin Pie.”

“A Salty…… Pumpkin pie?”

“Mhm. It’s a local cuisine in Europe…… Just talking about it would be difficult to understand right? Mixing

the eggs and pumpkin puree together before pouring the batter across the pie dough and topping it with whipped cream and cheese. That is a European style baked cuisine . Although I've tasted it once during my journeys, it has really struck me well in the strike zone."[35]

Picking up a pumpkin while having an expression of being lost in reminiscence that allowed his lips to part slightly in relaxation. It was a rare expression coming from him.

And Lily, who had also lost herself in her imagination of that Salty Pumpkin Pie which she had yet to see, was having a blissful smile.

"Just listening to the description is already enough for me to judge it as a delicacy."

"Oh! I will also guarantee that it tastes just as great."

Laughing loudly, Izayoi spun the pumpkin on his hand while standing up.

"If we are making salty pumpkin pie, we would still need wheat flour and other ingredients. Lily, do you know anywhere that we can get those items?"

"Ah, yes! I'll lead the way!"

Pi[36] Lily's kitsunemimi perked up.

After saying their farewells to Kirino, who stayed behind at the food storage warehouse, the duo left for the plaza where there were small stalls for the purchasing of meat and wheat.

Part 2

—Bazaar of [Underwood]

The figures of Kudou Asuka and Kasukabe Yō appeared in the Bazaar grounds.

The Bazaar, which was really lively due to the visitors and guests for the Harvest Festival, did not only vend food. It had also displayed a wide variety of fabric, weavings and clothes that were dyed with a selection of uniquely local dyes, and offering a range for the customers to choose from.

However, due to the blessing of the warm climate in the South Side for the whole year, the dimensions of

which the fabric constitutes the clothing were relatively small. In other words, they were relatively revealing.

Asuka stared pointedly at the South Side costume in her hand.

DeN...

"……This, is a little embarrassing."

"Is that so? I think it really suits you, Asuka."

Yō, who accompanied Asuka for shopping, stretched her head over to have a look.

Held in her hand was a hakama that had its midriff portion boldly removed and its lower portion replaced by a tight fitting miniskirt. The skirt with red floral patterns seemed to be designed with the intention to completely reveal one's legs.

Although Asuka had taken a liking to the floral designs, the thought of having her thighs fully exposed was enough to put a pained expression on her face.

"This sort of clothes, I think I will still ……"

"Oh okay. Then what sort of clothes would Asuka like ? Western Dresses?"

"Regardless of the Eastern or Western styles, I'm just fine with anything that is kawaii. I've also often worn kimonos in the past."

Oohh, a glow was lighted up within Yō's eyes.

"I like the kimono too. There's this closely hugging feel when you wear them."

"Fufu, right. It's better to have one set with us just in case. Let's go visit [Thousand Eyes] to browse for one when we get a chance then."

The duo smiled and nodded to each other.

And turned to look at the direction where there was a sudden stream of voices. They then spotted Lily and Izayoi, whose hands were full with items he had purchased.

Noticing Asuka's wave, Izayoi waved at them in return.

"Hey, you girls are also here to buy stuff?"

"Mhm. We currently have some time on our hands."

"We were taking the opportunity to prepare that plan …… to find a present for Kuso Usagi."

Yō pointed to the Bazaar stalls that displayed many small goods.

Lily's kitsunemimi perked up immediately as she smiled.

"Kuro Usagi Onee-san…… will be happy upon receiving the presents?"

"Well, that will have to depend on the individual's effort. But back to the topic, how are you girls faring?"

"Fufu. This is a red painted comb that is made from the craving of a Water Tree branch."

"This is a good comb that can moisturize a bed hair into being smooth and obedient. And we got three of them of different designs for the three of us."

Heheh, the duo proudly lifted their heads and puffed their chests. A comb that is carved from the Water Tree branch probably worked by giving moisture to the hair when made into a product like this.

Izayoi, who has not decided on his present, was impressed by their unexpectedly quick and forthright choice.

“Huoh? An exquisite piece of the local crafts is quite a good choice indeed. Although there isn’t a wow factor to it, but it is quite a formal gift.”

“I guess I must thank you for your gracious attitude. So, have you decided on yours yet, Izayoi?”

“No, I’ve not chosen mine yet. I’m just here in the market for other things.”

The other two tilted their heads and Lily, who stood at the side, quickly supplied an explanation.

“Because Izayoi-san says that he wants to treat me to a Salty Pumpkin Pie….. Would you two like to come along ?”

Lily extended the invitation to the two as her tails went pitter pattering in their waving motions.

Asuka and Yō were so surprised that they were stunned but they immediately gave a big smile while nodding in assent.

“Hm~…… Izayoi doing the cooking. Can you really do it?”

“Heheh, of course. I bet it will be better than you guys too, you know?”

“……My, I guess I cannot let that comment pass.”

The two were fired up by Izayoi’s challenge to them. It was a challenge that the girl’s camp could not ignore.

The trio who were eyeing each other had simultaneously,

“—topic?”

“Western style cuisine. The main dish is salty pie and there’s the remaining choices for the soup and the entrée[37].”

“Got it. Let’s go, Asuka!”

Asuka and Yō sped off towards the ingredient storage warehouse and Izayoi sent them off with his eyes before laughing loudly in satisfaction.

“We did it, Lily! The number of dishes have increased now!”

“Hehe, we did it-?”

Pi Lily’s kitsunemimi perked up in joy.

Subsequently, Izayoi, who had procured the necessary ingredients, seemed really motivated when he parted ways with Lily after saying “Let’s meet up here after an hour from now”.

With the spare time in the schedule, Lily started to wander around the Bazaar while searching for a present to give to Kuro Usagi, just like Asuka and the others.

For the preparations in the Harvest Festival, the Senior Group were also given a small amount of salary that was roughly around the amount for their pocket money. But that was only to be calculated and paid to them after the completion of the jobs. Bouncing along while wagging her two tails which went pitter patter, Lily started to search for a present in the small gift shops.

(*Initially, I wanted to give Kuro Usagi Onee-san a hairpin ….but after some thought, it would be best to give her something else right?*)

Mhm~, Lily was troubled. What she had initially considered was a hair pin that would accentuate on the wearer's beauty just like the one worn by Kirino. Then again, although Kuro Usagi liked wearing exquisite costumes, she wasn't the kind who would care for accessories. And that was Lily's take on the matter.

(*Although there's this white and yellow gorgeous hair accessory and such a beautiful hair ornament would sit well with KuroUsagi Onee-san's preferences, but if Asuka-san and Yō-san are gifting to her a comb…… Mhm Mhm~~ It does seem to match too.*)

"WUAAAAAAHHHHHHH! There's a runaway cow running WAIIIIILLLLLDDDD!!!!"

EH? Hearing that shout, she then turned to look towards the crowd. Subsequently, from the opposite side of the street that converged into the market, a sound of pounding hooves*Don Don Don DonDonDon!!!* and a swirl of dust accompanied the runaway cow as it charged violently into the Bazaar.

"Aie….. AIIEE–!??"

Unable to avoid the sudden onset of the incident, she was sent flying from the collision on her back. The great momentum of the collision caused Lily to somersault in the air for a few complete rounds before being bounced about. Knocked into the crowd and continuing to bounce about, Lily's eyes were already traveling in spirals.

Kya~, with a scream in surprise, and even though the world around her continued to spin and cause her to see stars, she managed to force herself upright.

Then, after some difficulty, she noticed the changes in her surroundings.

(*AH…..A Re? It was still midday a moment ago, how did it become so dark…..?*)

She looked around herself in all directions.

It would seem that she had rolled into a crevice in a certain cliff of the Underground City. The cliff walls rose all around her and that prevented sunlight from filtering in. Thus making it seem dark. Looking overhead, one could see that the tree roots had grown over the crevice

of the cliff like a stitching of a wound and seemed to be the support for this place in addition to the reason for making it seem dark.

However, there was a light from a man-made source that could be barely made out in the depths of the cliff.

"There's a shop…… in this sort of place?"

The passage that connected to the depths was wide enough to barely fit a grown man, but it was without doubt that there truly was a torch or something similar ahead as it was flickering unsteadily.

Lily was torn between the urge to leave this dark location and the interest which had started to burn out of curiosity about the shop in this incredibly absurd place.

(*For all I know, maybe I might just find the perfect gift in this place too……*)

—Because in this world of Little Garden, it was a place that many Demigods and deities resided. Perhaps there is a chance to dig up some treasure unknown to man in this sort of unlikely place too. Lily's curiosity suppressed her timid inner voice as she continued to press forward.

After moving some distance towards the light source, the passage from the cliff crevice had widened up to enter a trimmed little alley and a look behind told Lily that she had already travelled quite a distance from the original spot .

Could I have lost my way in a terrifying place? Her body started to tremble when she entertained that thought. Even so, she pressed on to walk up to the luxuriously styled elegant doors. And these must be the entrance to the store.

Pieces of glass were hung on the sides of the luxurious doors and they spun while catching the light. The jet black base color of the doors were matched with a gold leaf pattern running along its length. Although it was a cause for hesitation to see such a classy store, which anyone could have recognized with a glance, in this place , it would be a waste to have come this far only to turn back the way she came.

Lily slowly turned the handle of the door to secretly investigate the interior of the shop.

Part 3

—[Underwood], Dinner in the Main Guest Quarters.

The sun had set and night has fallen. Listening to the gurgling water from the Great Tree, the [No Name]s have started their dinner feast.

Hearing word that the problem children were going to display their skills, Garol from [Six Scars] and Sala from [One Horn] had also joined in to make it a rowdier banquet than originally planned.

Garol, who brought his rum, was happily drinking in the food while showing praises upon the cooks who presented their cuisines for the banquet that night.

“Kuu Ha!! My, My! You guys also have to be better than the average in your cooking as well? It would be such a pity if you guys did not turn up for the culinary meet with this standard!”

“…… Oh, don’t kid around. My cooking skills are still within the range of personal interest. If you really want us to play in the competitive field, I think we can only choose Kasukabe to be the representative.”

Izayoi was slightly glum as he gnawed at his salty pie.

Asuka, who sat beside him, had also added listlessly.

“You’re right…… I really didn’t expect Kasukabe to be that proficient in cooking. And in turn, that really gives me a little bit of anxiety……”

“Is, Is that so?”

Yō scratched her head while revealing an embarrassed smile.

Before her was the vegetable soup that was ready to be served.

The aroma of the spices wafted up together with the steam from the hot soup to stimulate the noses of the diners. And it looked more appetizing in the cold evening of [Underwood].

Sala, who sat with them, took a scoop of the hot steaming potato to deliver it into her mouth with deliberation. A reddish glow then spread across Sala’s cheeks and her mouth relaxed as she nodded her head.

"No, this is really done quite well. It isn't just the method of cooking, it looks like even the selection of ingredients have been taken into careful consideration."

"Mhm. I specialize in the finding of the best parts of good. After all, I did live alone and in my goal of making delicious meals for myself, I have unknowingly reached this stage."

Yō nodded and replied with a bit of pride. Izayoi only grew gloomier as he took another bite of the salty pie.

Just then, she turned her line of sight to watch Lily who sat directly before her.

"…… What's wrong, Lily? Aren't you going to start eating?"

"Aye…… ah, right! Itadakimasu[38]!"

Clasping her hands together for a while before frantically digging into her food. Everyone would have thought that Lily would immediately be happily cheering. But time passed and there was no sign of Lily giving that sort of response. Even looking to be distracted when she tucked into her food.

Noticing that, Asuka asked worriedly.

“Lily, what’s wrong? Do you have something bothering you?”

“No, that’s not it. It’s not like that.”

“But this doesn’t seem to be the usual you. In reality, something must have happened right?”

Leaning forward while pressing the questions.

Although Lily lapsed into a short troubled silence, she then quietly lifted her head a moment later to recount the incident in a way that seemed to be voicing her inner thoughts.

“Actually, I found a really amazing shop today…… there is this really beautiful brooch on the display which I really wanted to give to Kuro Usagi Onee-san.”

“Heh? Isn’t that good for you?”

“Yes. But…… I’m unable to buy it……”

Her kitsunemimi drooped dejectedly. Making a guess at the reason, Yō immediately followed it up.

"If you are short of pocket money, would you like me to chip in the rest?"

"No, it's not like that! Although my pocket money is indeed insufficient, but it is also a shop that does not allow me to buy the items in another sense."

"A shop that does not allow you to buy the items in another sense?"

Everyone turned to look at each other, puzzled.

But only Izayoi had this sharp glint in his eyes as he gave a grin.

"Could it be that this involves a Gift Game of sorts?"

"…… Yes. There is this [Geass Roll] stuck to the entrance of the shop that has the meaning of 'only those who can pass the game, may purchase the goods as a customer'."

"What a shop that doesn't have the intention to sell stuff. Is that sort of shop common?"

Izayoi looked towards the Host, Sala and Garol.

The two of them had pained expressions but did not deny it.

"It is not like it does not exist. Many shops that have a high sense of pride in their Community's Flag may set these sort of conditions."

"That's right. Even the shops of [Six Scars] also have the condition for new customers to pass a Game ….. but it is rare to see this sort of behavior when it is in a bazaar open to everyone."

Garol supplemented the information with a tinge of displeasure in his voice. It must be the dissatisfaction of having a shop that is keen on selecting its own customers in the bazaar hosted by himself. In a normal context, this would have been a very impolite behavior.

But Lily shook her head in negation.

"About that, I feel that it isn't a Gift Game with that sort of meaning to it. Because there isn't any store owner in that shop."

"What?"

Garol had really shouted in earnest surprise now. Lily then repeated the incident about the encounter with that store in the unlikely location with more supplements to it .

From the quietly extending dim passage way in the crevice of the cliff.

The black painted luxurious doors that were patterned with gold leaves.

The displayed goods that exhibited a different feel of condensed elegance.

The blue eyed doll that held the [Geass Roll].

"Houh. A maze-like passage way, luxurious doors, many grandiose displays in addition to the lack of a shop keeper…… usually for that sort of scenario, it is a type of trap set to deal with robbers isn't it?"

"Yeah. If it weren't a pure minded child, such as Lily, the person might be attacked upon taking the treasure."

Asuka also nodded her head with her vigilance heightened at that thought. The topic was now floating in the midst of suspicions.

"Then, what were the contents of the [Geass Roll]?"

"Well, although I can't recall the full text…… In the depth of the shop, there is this chair that seems to be placed for the shop keeper. And the contents seems to point to the repair of the doll that seats upon the chair… …that seems to be all."

"…… sounds really vague."

Yō slightly tilted her head while Lily wagged her two tails and looked down with a troubled expression.

Perhaps they felt that thinking too much about it would not help things either, the problem children trio then stood up from their chairs,

"Anyways, if there exists a shop that is rigged with a lure and trap, it would spell trouble for us."

"Yeah. We won't be able to conclude anything if we do not see it with our own eyes."

"Mhm. The most important part is that it sounds really interesting. "

After Yō said that, Izayoi and Asuka also nodded their heads in strong agreement.

Garol and Sala stared at the trio in a daze for a while before giving a slight shrug of their shoulders.

"Oi, Representative-san. Could I ask of you to come have a look at the location as one of the Hosts?'

"Understood. If it is a threatening existence, it would be okay to destroy it right?"

"Aahh. Destroy it before it causes any casualties."

As the banquet ended, the direction of the next course of action was decided.

The problem children trio, Sala, and Lily left the Main Guest Quarters.

Part 4

—Eve of the Harvest Festival, [Underwood, Underground City]’s Bazaar.

Breaking away from the noisy and bustling crowd at the bazaar, due to the impatient participants milling around the bazaar in wait for the start of the Festival, the gang soon arrived at the cliff crevice. And they scrunched their brows upon the sensation of the strange atmosphere that surrounded the unnatural crack.

Even though the crevice was clearly wide enough to allow a person to pass through, was it really possible to have no one notice it up till now? The mobile shops and clamor of the crowds weren't even close to this area and it seemed rather desolate.

Holding his suspicions about the place, Izayoi glanced around and grinned.

“I see. It was intentionally made to seem difficult to fit anyone, huh?”

“It appears to be so…… maybe there’s a Gift that drives people away being used.”

"Ara, then how did Lily find this crevice?"

"That, That's , because……when I was sent flying by a rampaging cow……"

What? Everyone asked in unison.

"Oi Oi…… What do you mean by rampaging cow? Have you entered a bullfighting ring?"

"Yeah. To be sent flying into the crevice by a rampaging cow……wouldn't that be too coincidental?"

"Mhm. There happened to be a rampaging cow and it happened to send Lily flying. How can such a coincidence…"

"Wuaaaaahhhh! There are rampaging HORSSSSEEEEEssssssss!!!!!!!!"

Neigh NEIGH~!!!! A herd of rampaging horses were neighing as they appeared.

Lily who stood at the rear was once again "Kyaa~!?" sent flying into the crevice with a scream.

"—……"

“—……,”

“—…… .”

“Oi! What are you guys waiting for?! Quickly go after that child!”

Sala shouted at them before dragging the Problem Children Trio behind her.

Coming to their senses, the trio immediately ran to chase after Lily.

Part 5

After a five minute trek in the crevice of the Underground City, Izayoi and the others found Lily in a pretty neat location that has a similarly neatly arranged shop.

Asuka hurriedly strode over to hug her in worry.

“Are, Are you alright, Lily?!”

“Ye, Yes…… I’m just feeling a little dizzy until now……”

Even though the stars were still spinning above her head, Lily was still able to give a polite reply. And after everyone felt relieved, the spears of anger were then pointed towards the rampaging horses from before.

"Kasukabe. What do you think about horse meat sashimi for tomorrow's dinner?"

"Agreed. Let's just throw in barbecued rampaging beef on the side as well."

Mhm, they gave a hard nod of their heads at each other. Although Sala was very surprised, she proceeded to light a fire at the end of her finger as a substitute light source, illuminating the area while taking the lead. After all, the moonlight overhead was blocked off by the network of roots from the Great Tree.

The territory of the crack was still slightly moist and this meant that it was created during the appearance of the Huge Dragon. Then at the very least, this shop would have appeared during the span of ten days prior to the discovery.

(*This, could this be……?*)

Even though there was a bad premonition that nagged at Sala's mind, she continued to walk on the path that was painted and tidied in quite a neat condition.

Finally arriving before the shop, the group of five stood before the black doors which were the topic of their journey. The Geass Roll that stated "Only accepting the patronage of customers who have passed the Game" was stuck to it and the extravagant style coupled with the gold leafed patterns gave an undeniably posh feeling to their senses.

The group of five glanced at each other before placing their hands on the door in a slow motion.

In the midst of opening the doors, the blinding light streamed into their eyes.

"—Hey……!"

The thing that emitted the blinding radiance was found to be a large amount of indescribably elegant jewelry and antiques. Draped across the display cabinets, which were lined with ruby and gold rings, was an iridescent piece of tapestry that seemed to be a work produced with the finest techniques of craftsmanship. If

one were to look for the highest priced item in the shop, it would most likely be that veil for it was emitting a fine radiance that would not lose if it were to be compared to other precious metals and it was definitely the work of a famous craftsman of some unknown lands.

Just a little distance away, in the forefront of the slightly too exquisite carpet, there stood a finely crafted antique made with the most detailed of techniques.

The entire room was efficiently utilized to display the items that ranged from large clothing racks, longcase clocks, and miniature models of water wheels[39] that are powered by the principle of buoyancy, tumblers that do not stop rocking and many other items of unknown uses. The space was clearly larger than what it had appeared to be on the outside.

“This really …. Looks more of a museum than a shop house to me.”

“Ara, but it seems like that isn’t the case. If you take a closer look, you will be able to find the price tags on all the items right?”

What? Asuka asked in reply but immediately took a ring off a nearby shelf to have a closer look.

Stuck to it was a small price tag that was equivalent to ten years of living expenses for their current [No Name] Community.

"…… . This is really sickening." Izayoi commented while giving a light shrug of his shoulders.

It didn't matter how much those items glittered or caught the eye for the moment because it would be no different from a museum when the prices deter any desire to purchase.

On the other hand, Yō and Sala had strode ahead, having no interest in those gems and treasures. The duo, who moved in a straight line down the shops aisle, soon discovered the shopkeeper's chair and the blue eyed female doll. And true to Lily's description, a [Geass Roll] was held in her hand. Although Yō read the document held in her hand, she fell into a contemplative silence after a single glance.

<<– I'm the most hardworking person in the world—

The first me is the most hardworking person in the world!
I could work, work and work non-stop without a need for a helping hand, you know?!
And because of my efforts placed in my continuous hard work, number 1 father was also very happy!
But there came a day when that was found to be a lie.
My first father and I were then destroyed by the unravelled lie.

The second me is the most hardworking person in the world!

Due to help from friends, I'm then able to work, work and work non-stop, you know?!
And because of my efforts placed in my continuous hard work, number 2 father was also very happy!
But there came a day when that was found to be fake.
But my second father and I were able to continue working due to help from friends.

The third me is the true hardworking person!
Although it is yet to be born, but it will continuously work non-stop, you know?!
Hurry up and be born! Hurry up and be born!
Oh, that's what everyone is saying!
But there came a day when I was found to be unable to be born.
So number 3 father abandoned the third me!
But that is not permitted! Many fathers are awaiting for my arrival!

Fortune! Fame! The dreams of Man! It will all be true if I can be born!
So I plea…… Do not give up on me……! For those who comply, will reach the truth……!>>

"That's….the [Geass Roll]?"

"Although it is quite an unusual style in the content arrangement, it would most likely be so."

Sala gazed through the contents of the scroll with a serious focus in her eyes, but after reading through it once, she simply gave up.

"Sorry about this, but I really can't understand it at all. I guess I will leave it to you guys then."

"Oi Oi. How can the newly appointed [Floor Master] be like that?"

Hearing Izayoi's teasing comment, Sala gave a reply while giving a rare pout of her lips.

"I'm not good at this sort of intellectually stimulating games. Although in [Salamandra], there is this specialized department for the solving of riddles……"

"But there is no such department in the [Draco Greif] Alliance right? So what happens if you were to be faced with an intellectual type of Demon Lord in the next battle ?"

Ugu, she fell silent at that. It was the pain of having hit the mark that stopped any other retorts.

Sala's red hair shook as she turned her head away, while her cheeks reddened slightly.

"……I know that. But not everyone can be a jack of all trades like you or Shiroyasha-sama you know?"

Sala was slightly displeased. However, she then relented with a shrug of her shoulders to pick up the scroll again to have another look. Although Izayoi temporarily rested his hand on his chin while delving into his thoughts…… he suddenly squinted his eyes to stare into the distance.

"For those who comply, will reach the truth……? Ha, this really is quite a cruel game."

"Aye?"

Yō and Asuka were in concerto when they made that exclamation. But soon after, the shop suddenly started to be filled with the sounds of a tremor.

"What…. What's happening……?!"

Although there were no windows close to them for them to ascertain the situation, it was clear enough that it was no normal earthquake. It was the shop itself that was shaking. Within this dazzling shop, there was some sort of thing that was crawling through.

Sensing that, Sala and Yō gave the shout to sound the alarm.

"Be careful! There seems to be something coming!"

"And it is probably…….more than a few……!"

Yō opened up her senses to pinpoint the source of the tremor and discovered its source to be in the exact

opposite direction from the entrance. In the very depths of the shop, where the signage of “No entry for unauthorized personnel” was, there seemed to be a type of threat coming closer.

Izayoi wordlessly placed Lily onto his shoulders,

“Lily. Stay close, no matter what.”

“Ye, Yes!”

“— here they come!”

With Yō’s words as the lighted fuse, they then appeared at the doorway, in numbers of a hundred strong and of different sizes—

A group of strong men dolls.[40]

“ “ “ **——Waaaah!** ” ” ”

The trio gave a horrified scream at the same time. Just like a timed reaction that did not have any discrepancy of a delay, it was truly the epitome of being united as one.

Even Sala, who had entered combat mode, was impacted to the extent that her beautiful red hair had lost its sheen to be a state of grayish white. While Lily was already scared to the point of tearing at the corner of her eyes.

The metal arms of the enemy were crafted with the details of a glossy muscle. Any expert would have understood the beauty of those muscles with just a look. From the brown tanned muscles and the majestic tyranny of clothes which was a pair of briefs, to the subtly twitching chest and back muscles, one could see the fine craftsmanship in the detailed work. The person who created these dolls was undoubtedly a fine doll designer. And after posing a few graceful poses, the strong men dolls flashed a bright smile that showed off their dazzling white teeth,

"……Angry!"

"Angry?!"

"Angry?!!"

"It said angry right?!! It just said angry right??!"

"Hey, the girl's camp should calm down. What you've heard just now, should not be their voices."

Izayoi tried to calm down the girl's camp that was entering a state of confusion. Though this sort of scenario was also quite a rare sight to behold.

Taking this opportunity, the atmosphere around the muscled dolls had changed to enter a combat state,

"…… Strong men!"

"Strong men?!"

"Strong men?!!"

"Strong men?!! It definitely said strong men just now!"

"Yes they did. It did shout strong man just now."

Regarding the extremely chaotic state of mind that the girl's camp were in at the moment, Izayoi judged that

there was no other cards for him to play and promptly gave up. On the other hand, Lily was already *Ka Da Ka Da*ing away, trembling on Izayoi's shoulder.

The scouting party which had lost its chain of command Vs the assortment of Strong men dolls of different sizes.

Izayoi's group had entered an unprecedented state of emergency.

Both parties were temporarily eying each other — And the first to react was from the side of the strong men.

"——CHARGE WUOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

"___ Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh!!!"

Charging bravely, yes, charging bravely[41] is the only phrase that could describe the approaching group of strong men dolls which were howling in their charge.

It would also be not too much to call the scene of rippling tanned muscles, in the midst of their charge, as a

fantasy like moment. The big muscles that were filled with a wondrous sense of touching beauty did not only represent muscles in itself but the energetic run that they were engaging at the moment.

In the face of such ideal muscles, gold and gemstones were unable to hold a candle in comparison and the strong men's stride ploughed through the precious metals and smashed them to powder. It would seem that being caught by them would not be a joking matter after all.

But what caused the girl's camp to fear, was another aspect of the matter.

"It's, It's disgusting! Really disgusting!!"

"No way, this sort of thing should not exist."

The faces of Asuka and Yō were pale and they were backing away from the sight of these men with ideal muscles. As for Sala, she was already out of the door by then. It would seem that she's also quite scared by this. No matter how stern the atmosphere around her was in the usual situation, it would seem that she had just been

faced with the bottom line of biologically induced disgust that should have never been touched in her lifetime.

Izayoi was the only one who was backing away while saying softly,

"……I would like to have one."

"No, don't!"

"Stop it!"

"Please, Please do not do that Izayoi-san!"

Uu giving that unfortunate sound that sounded like a sigh in resignation.

Izayoi then grabbed Asuka under his arm to break into a dash in the attempt to break away from the crowd of strong men.

At the last moment before exiting the shop—Izayoi gave a sidelong glance towards the silent and lonely looking doll which sat upon the shopkeeper's chair.

"…… . No matter what, I must come here again."

"**Firmly Rejected!!**"

It was rare for Yō to have the moment of being as loud and vocal as Asuka in voicing her thoughts like this.

Up till the point of the cliff crevice entrance, the group of four who escaped the shop were continuously pursued by the group of strong men.

Part 6

In the depths of the extravagantly decorated shop house, the doll quietly watched the backs of the retreating invaders.

When the sound of the door closing echoed in the room, the doll started to rock left and right with the sounds of *Ka Chi Ka Chi*.

—Sigh *Ahh*, the customers this time are still unable to be satisfied?

The doll with translucent azure blue eyes and the pale blond hair that would leave an impression on anyone's mind would have given the illusion of being a real

human as it gracefully sat up straight. The eyes were also filled with the glow of life while its skin seemed flushed and similar to the coloration of having a body's heat and blood coursing within it.

Stepping off from her seat, her short skirt fluttered in the wind as she danced through the smashed up shop with small spinning steps.

Those graceful steps would have given the illusion of belonging to the dance of a ballerina.

No, that wasn't a metaphor— She was indeed dancing the "Dancing Doll (Coppelia)[42]."

"La……La , La……"

Humming a song in the store that had no music, her skirt whipped through the air as she made leaps and sharp turns in her dance steps.

In unison with her brisk steps around the shop, the wreckage were also made to return to its original forms and locations. The doll, which looked around the shop in inspection of her sweep's completion, then returned to her original position without another stray thought.

"Would the next customer— Desire me?"

Seeming in anticipation for this moment, the light in the shop went off as the sign of life left the azure blue eyes.

As the intruders left the area, the "Dancing Doll" resumed her deep sleep.

Until the day that her fated love appears.

Part 7

— Nightfall, [Underwood]'s bazaar.

The underground city, constructed from the excavation of the soil under the great tree, continued to be bustling with life as it was the few nights prior to the Harvest Festival. And in the bazaar, which saw no difference in the crowds be it night or day, a lone sign to restrict entry was set at the side to block the way into an unnatural crack in the cliff.

The fox girl who wore a smock-frock —Lily, stood before the board while clenching her fists tightly.

"It's just as I thought. That brooch is really the cutest……"

Pa Da Pa Da Lily looked at the crevice while wagging her tails.

Besides the main Communities of Agriculture and Huntsmen, there were also Communities of the herdsmen tribes, performance, and many other visitors of various professions. Although the goods that they brought with them were unique and not shoddy in the slightest, it still felt a little lacking somewhere if it were to be given to Kuro Usagi as a present.

It was then that she had found the impossible existence— the shop which was located in the depths of the cracked ground.

The interior was decked with many luxurious decorations and filled with glittery goods which would surely dazzle the eyes of the beholder. It was in this shop , which was filled with goods which Lily could never hope to purchase with those exorbitant price tags, that Lily found a plain wooden brooch that sat in a solitary corner in the shop. It was a brooch that could not be called an exquisite piece of work but its pretty design

was filled with a simple sense of a delicate beauty and she could tell that it is something that Kuro Usagi would like at first glance.

"Even if it is just that brooch, I wonder if I'm able to buy it……"

Mhm~, holding her head between her hands, she pondered over her troubles.

And the reason for her to be outside, trying to muster her courage, is due to her fear of the shop's residents. Although there did not seem to be any ill-will from them, the muscle group that was overflowing with a lively bounce to them would surely trigger a biological sense of disgust.

Although Lily really wanted to make Kuro Usagi happy, much more than anyone else, she still needed someone to help give a push from behind.

"There are rampaging HORSSSSEEEEEssssssss!!!"

"There's a runaway cow running WAIIIIILLLLLDDDD!!!!"

Aye? Turning her head.

In the next moment, due to the rampage of runaway horse and cow, Lily was sent flying into the crevice.

Kyah-! While screaming, she was sent rolling into the passage like a cart wheel. With two times the horse power than before, Lily was naturally sent rolling two times the distance into the passage and the back shaft of her head directly connected with the door in the deepest recesses of the place.

Standing up with much difficulty as her head swam and saw stars, Lily faced the posh looking black based doors with gold leafed patterns while steeling her resolve .

"……Let's try this another time. Wait for me, Kuro Usagi-Onee-san!"

Pi Her kitsunemimi were perked up as she turned the handle of the door.

Lily, by herself, then opened the door to the dubious shop.

Part 8

—[Underwood], Kitchen number 14.

Although it need not be mentioned at this point in time anymore.

Sakamaki Izayoi has a side that would stubbornly not concede defeat.

Although he was gifted with many congenital talents, it wasn't as if he would always be victorious and not be defeated in any battles. Especially in the contest of culinary skills which was a very subjective matter, the times of defeat had been quite a number. He had also paid it no mind due to his assumption that the field of expertise was different for him.

However, the dinner for the previous night was slightly different.

Kasukabe Yō and Sakamaki Izayoi, the two who stood on the same ground as the main force of the Community. And it was in that contest with a person of the same position and of the same cooking style that the dishes were brought to the table for a judging between the superior and inferior of the dishes. Since Izayoi also concurred that those dishes were “better than mine”, then he must put in his utmost effort for the next time. Else it would not sit well with him.

“—okay. With this, it is done.”

With a look of satisfaction, he stood akimbo while confirming the dough.

The dish was the same as previously, a salty pumpkin pie. But the ingredients used for the pie was completely different from before. After all, the ingredients delivered to the Harvest Festival are of a superior quality that cannot be found on normal days.

Using the bacon smoked from the horned pig, cheese from the white cows, the Sakura Eggs and incorporated with the special margarine extracted from the pumpkins of [Will O’ Wisp] and many more.

In fact, there was this strong and intimidating presence in Izayoi's shadow as he put his utmost effort into the preparation of the dish. Maybe and perhaps unfortunately, he might be more focused in this than in any normal Gift Games.

As one of the helpers for the dish preparation—Shirayuki gave a sigh in surprise.

"Hmph. My master, to go to this extent just for the dinner, it really shows the lack of magnanimity in you."

"Well, it's your mouth to say that. …… But come to think about it, I did ask you to slice the bacon into thin slices right? How did it become diced? This does not seem to be a problem with being just clumsy anymore."

"This, this is the fault of the brat who asked a Divinity possessor to handle the kitchen knife!"

Shirayuki bared her teeth as her face was flushed red.

In the end, Izayoi concluded that she was of no help and only shrugged his shoulders.

He then placed the salty pie dough into the old-looking clay oven to be baked.

“Let’s test with one for now. It will be some time before it is done. Just in time Shirayuki, can you accompany me for a little?”

“Where to?”

“The Gift Game Riddle that I’ve mentioned earlier. Although I’ve given it much thought, it is highly possible to be a lure and trap type of Game and it is for the best to destroy it before anyone participates in it by accident.”

—Mhm? Shirayuki slightly tilted her head.

“That’s a really rare opinion from one who’s always so confident. Not to clear but to destroy?”[43]

“Aahh. It is the same conclusion that Garol oji-san and I came to after much discussion.”

Untying his apron, Izayoi made preparations to set out .

Shirayuki continued to frown in disapproval. For her, who have hosted many games as a Divinity possessor, this topic was definitely a bad one to hold.

—Gift Games can be broadly divided into two categories.

And they were for the purpose of commerce or the trails set by demigods and gods for Mankind.

Especially the latter, those kinds would mostly be difficult and arduous games. But the difficulty of the trial is also a way for the gods to show their confidence in their participants as well as their love. Although a trial might be made to be of a tough level, the game is hosted for the bestowing of their godly Gifts to others without any conditions attached. So there has to be some mercy attached to the game for the participants.

To say that the trial “should be destroyed because it is too dangerous”, would be a little hard to stomach.

“…… What an unpleasant topic. Isn’t there the method of restricting the participants instead of destroying the game?”

"I get what you are trying to say…… but that game will not do. That game does not have an established method to be cleared."

—what? Shirayuki uttered her thoughts.

Izayoi supplemented the last portion as he pulled on his top.

"It's also the first that I've heard from Garol Oji-san…… Shirayuki, have you heard of the [Game of Paradox]?"

Part 9

—[Underwood], Office of the Alliance's Representative.

Sala, the [Dragon Greif][44] Alliance representative, took a glance at the pile of documents that seemed to have accumulated to the size of a small mountain and sagged her shoulders as energy seemed to drain out of her.

"These are all the documents regarding the resistance against the Demon Lord that I will have to tidy up?"

The office table was not stacked with information concerning the activities of the Alliance. Instead, it was the information for the [Floor Master] to study, regarding the establishing of specialized departments required for the organization.

And those were the required information for the establishing of an [Anti-Demon Lord troop].

A [Floor Master] need not necessarily take a trip down to solve all the battles. It is also needless to say that there is a need for experts in various realms of game aspects when it came to battles with demon lords.

If one were to go into the detailed categories, it would be an endless topic. However, there were at least three major classifications for the troops.

The Military squad, Knowledge squad — and the Game Controller who will lead them through the Game to attain victory.

If one were to be a [Floor Master], the aspect of military might would not be a worry. Of course, to be

able to prepare more personnel for that realm will definitely be welcomed, but there needs to be a minimum requirement for the strength levels.

However, the talents who possess knowledge about Little Garden and the other worlds would have to be nurtured from scratch. Even if the role of Game Controller were to be given to Sala, the Alliance would still lack talented individuals to provide knowledge required to clear the games.

"Then, that leaves the only option of taking it up myself. I will just give it a go and see what happens……"

Sala scratched her red head and sighed once more.

In the previous Community which she had belonged to— [Salamandra], the leader of the North, had specialized departments and that allowed her to slack off . However, there wasn't any foundation of that sort in the [Draco Grief] Alliance. The only one who could be trusted to take on the task, Elder Garol was also unavailable for them to depend upon, as [Six Scars] have decided to break away.

……For all we know, it was due to their foresight of this problem that they decided to break away.

Just as Sala was thinking about these things while hugging her head, a knock came from the door of the Representative's office.

"Sala. May we enter?"

"Asuka? Yes, you may, what's wrong?"

After obtaining the permission, Kudou Asuka and Kasukabe Yō walked into the office.

After the courteous bow, Yō looked at Sala.

"…… Could it be that you are busy at the moment?"

"No, I was just in the middle of resting, while hugging my head. —Well then, is something the matter?"

Upon hearing Sala's question, Asuka's face broke into a dauntless grin.

"Regarding the Gift Game's riddle that we went to look yesterday, we hope to obtain the permission to participate in it."

"When we went there earlier, we found the sign that restricted entry, so we hope to obtain the permission."

The duo cast their confident gazes at Sala.

Sala was deeply taken aback to the extent of gaping and staring at them with wide eyes.

"Could it be that you guys have unravelled the Game?!"

"Uh, Mhm Mhm. …… Although the one who unravelled it was Kasukabe-san."

"Mhm. That kind of realm is one of the compulsory subjects in my era."

Yō lightly clenched her fists.

She seemed to have a wise and learned side of her that did not seem to match her appearance. During the time of the Huge Dragon's game, Yō had also used her knowledge and actions to unravel the game to the point of clearance. Greatly interested, Sala readjusted the position of her propped up legs while asking once more.

"This seems to be a very interesting topic. May I ask Kasukabe-san to talk it through?"

Mhm. Nodding and opening the copied out [Geass Roll].

The contents were as follow.

<<– I'm the most hardworking person in the world—

The first me is the most hardworking person in the world!
I could work, work and work non-stop without a need for a helping hand, you know?!
And because of my efforts placed in my continuous hard work, number 1 father was also very happy!

But there came a day when that was found to be a lie.
My first father and I were then destroyed by the unravelled lie.

The second me is the most hardworking person in the world!
Due to help from friends, I'm then able to work, work and work non-stop, you know?!
And because of my efforts placed in my continuous hard work, number 2 father was also very happy!
But there came a day when that was found to be fake.
But my second father and I were able to continue working due to help from friends.

The third me is the true hardworking person!

Although it is yet to be born, but it will continuously work non-stop, you know?!
Hurry up and be born! Hurry up and be born!
Oh, that's what everyone is saying!
But there came a day when I was found to be unable to be born.
So number 3 father abandoned the third me!
But that is not permitted! Many fathers are awaiting for my arrival!
Fortune! Fame! The dreams of Man! It will all be true if I can be born!
So I plea…… Do not give up on me……! For those who comply, will reach the truth……!>>

Yō pointed to the first "me" in the document.

"The first conjecture is that the "me" in this document does not refer to a particular person and let's assume it to be a created item X."

"Huoeh…….?"

"The second conjecture is that the "father" is the creator who undergone various processes to achieve created item X, and they are the Creators A, B and C."

" "me" is said to be the same way each time but in contrast, the "father" is annotated in an indexed form. With these conjectures, it would then unravel the contradiction between the "me" and "father" in the document."

Hearing Asuka's supplement to the explanations, Sala nodded her head in admiration.

"I see…… So the reason for the numbered "father" is to hint at the point that the "me" is a man-made object, right?"

—Understanding up to this point, the riddle could be said to be almost unravelled.

The structure of this Gift Game was divided into three stanzas.

They were each describing a different construction progress.

The first stanza was on the failure of Creator A.

The second stanza is on the success of Creator B.

The third stanza is on the future of Creation X and Creator C.

Then, the host of the game would be — the creation from the research of those three times and might already be one that possess the spiritual attainment for anthropomorphization.

And she was afraid that it might even be an existence close to the concepts pertaining to the Gods or Demons.

“Through the research in the three eras to analyze and construct “a certain object”, that should roughly be the Creation X we are talking about.”

The knowledge problem would then come thereafter. The underlying tone of the stanza was a desire for a similar process to arrive at Creation X. Then, it would be solved if they were to gather the documents needed to provide the answer required by the riddle.

And in most cases, the first step to these sort of games would be to find the identity of the Host.

As long as the identity of “me” is understood, there would be hope of clearing the game.

While Sala was deeply impressed by their conjectures, Sala gave Yō an intrigued look.

“I’m impressed. You aren’t only stronger than expected for a girl, but you also possess such a great wealth of knowledge. That’s really impressive. …… Kasukabe-dono, do you have any dissatisfaction with your current Community?”

“Aye?”

“Wha?”

The duo squawked in their confusion.

Sala firmly grabbed Yō’s shoulder,

“Well, take for example, any dissatisfaction with your comrades, the lack of money, wanting to have a better place to stay or eat, any part of your living standards and such…”

“No, I don’t have any…… Lily’s cooking has always been tasty.”

"Oh, I see, I see. The treatment that Kasukabe-san is getting from the Community is mainly secured by food, is it? Regarding that point, there's no problem at all. —- Just mentioning on the side, we, comrades of the [Draco Grief] always get the chance to have a scrumptious feast every night."

"Wait, No, No will do, Sala! I will not allow you to continue in your touting and poaching." At this point in time, Asuka then realized the goal of Sala and immediately interrupted her words.

Although Yō's thoughts were confused by the sudden poaching and touting conversation, she still gave a bitter smile as she replied.

"Is that so…… Thank you for your warm welcome then, Sala."

"Kasukabe-san?!"

"Okay, leave it to me!"

"NO, This is not allowed! I will definitely not allow this!! [No Name] forbids poaching!!!"

Asuka hugged Yō's head under her arm before retreating rapidly. The amusing part was that it was a real reaction stemming from anxiety.

Sala's eyes were also narrowed and sharp like a predator and she was unusually serious about the matter .

Happily watching the two of them, Yō suppressed her desire to laugh as she looked towards Sala.

"Sorry, Sala, it would seem that [No Name] forbids poaching."

"Uu…… Then, I guess that leaves me no choice. Even though the feast is only open to comrades of the Alliance only."

"—Ugu."

"Wavering the hearts of others is also forbidden! Kasukabe-san is a hundred percent on our side—!!!"

In a certain perspective, Asuka, who sensed the situation to be worse than the threat of a Demon Lord, hugged Yō as they left the Representative's office.

Walking down the Great Tree while shouting those words.

Pretty serious about the poaching attempt, Sala then watched the retreating figures with a tinge of pity.

—However, her expression immediately changed upon remembering the matter that the duo were about to attempt.

"Drats……! Oi, is there anyone around?"

"Ye, Yes! Is something the matter?!"

"Immediately set out to the entrance of the Gift Game entrance and issue the warning for people to stay away from that area! I repeat, do not let anyone pass by that area!"

Receiving the orders from Sala, the subordinate frantically rushed down the Great Tree.

Confirming it once more, Sala flopped back onto her chair while hugging her head.

"With that sort of unique style in the [Geass Roll]……I'm afraid it might just be—"

—a Trial hosted with the use of an [Authority of Host Master]. And for it to have a unique style of poetry to mystify the contents, it would seem to be the work of a Host with quite a high spiritual power who pulls the strings in the background.

Hence Sala guessed that it is a trap type of Game created by a Demon Lord.

No matter how good Asuka and Yō may be in their talents, it was always better to have some preparation, just in case. Even if the identity of the enemy is understood, there still needs to be some preparation required to meet the problem.

“Mah…… I’ve already sent a person, I guess there won’t be anyone forcing their way in.”

Shaking her head to dismiss the uneasiness.

Readjusting her mood, Sala motivated herself as she restarted the battle with the pile of documents on her office table.

Part 10

—[Underwood], Large crevice in the earth.

Lily was in the midst of opening the door when the same blinding radiance filtered out to strike her eyes.

There were countless indescribably elegant decorations and antiques placed upon the glass display shelves. Draped across the display cabinets, which were lined with ruby and gold rings, was an iridescent piece of tapestry that seemed to be a work produced with the finest techniques of craftsmanship.

A veil that emitted a fine radiance, which would not lose if it were to be compared to other precious metals, was unmistakably the work of a famous craftsman of some unknown lands.

Just a little distance away, in the forefront of the slightly too exquisite carpet, there stood a finely crafted antique made with the most detailed of techniques.

The entire room was efficiently utilized to display the items that ranged from large clothing racks, longcase clocks, and miniature models of water wheels that are powered by the principle of buoyancy, tumblers that do

not stop rocking and many other items of unknown uses. The space was clearly larger than what it appeared to be on the outside.

"—Aye……?"

Lily's voice echoed in the shop which had no one else. However, that sound was not an amazed gasp from the sight of the amazing workpieces which lay before her.

What lay before her eyes were still the same gorgeous and luxuriously designed shop interior.

And it did not have any damages, when compared to the last visit.

"—."

Yes—Not a bit of damage at all.

"No …. No way……?!"

Lily’s low moan was closer to the feelings of horror. But that is to be expected.

Previously in this shop last night, the interior had been clearly destroyed and smashed up when Izayoi and the others escaped. The accessories that were the display of refined skills of craftsmen had been smashed while the closets were destroyed and the tapestry torn.

Even so, the current decorations of the interior were no different from the last.

Seeing the restored decorations just like the developing of photos from a film roll, Lily’s kitsunemimi drooped down timidly.

(*This is…… a real Gift Game……!*)

The radiance in the shop was no longer able to hide that strange atmosphere.

This was the Golden Demon mirror[45]. The stomach of the monster that is famed for swallowing its prey whole with the lure of fame and riches.

Even though her young heart had felt that sort of malicious intent, Lily continued to cheer herself on to push forward into the shop.

Just as she had expected, the brilliantly lighted shop was devoid of human presence. And at the very depths of the shop was the azure blue eyed doll that sat on the shop keeper's stool, holding the [Geass Roll] like before.

Beside the shop keeper's stool, a table was displaying the item that Lily wanted.

"Found it! …… But just as I thought, I really can't buy it right?"

Mhm~, she thought about it while wagging her two tails.

Not long after, someone struck up a conversation from behind.

"—what an intriguing customer. It isn't gold and jewels that capture your fancy, but you would like that wooden craved brooch?"

Eeeya!? Giving a startled cry, she turned her head. Behind her was a doll which had an atmosphere that was completely different from before.

Those eyes were filled with the glow of a will, the skin was flushed like the coloration of blood vessels under the skin. Her steps were light and graceful, and her posture was the impeccable appearance of a maiden.

Even though she was startled by the doll that suddenly came to life, Lily continued with a timid question.

“May I ask…….Are you the Host of this Game?”

“You are mistaken. I’m the emcee for the Game and at the same time, I double up as the shop keeper of this shop house. My name is Coppelia. For the purpose of serving customer, I’m here to await orders. …… And, please kindly be quiet in this store.”

Lightly touch her index finger to her lovely lips, she advised Lily to be quiet.

Pi Knowing that the doll called Coppelia did not have any animosity towards her, Lily's kitsunemimi perked up as she gave a small nod.

"…… Ningyo-san?"[46]

"That's right. Just like that, young fox."

After Coppelia nodded her head in reply, Lily leaned forward with sparkles in her eyes.

"Wuah……! It's my first time seeing such a beautiful ningyo-san!"

Pi! Lily's kitsunemimi perked up as she clasped her hands together.

Coppelia, who possessed eyes which could only be described as innocent-looking, accepted the forthcoming praise. Although there wasn't a change in her expression, but in between the increased blinks of the eyes, she lifted her skirt slightly to perform a curtsy.

"I appreciate your praise, young fox. Your kitsunemimi are also quite attractive."

"Is, Is that, right?"

"Yes. Just looking at those innocent and yet bold-looking kitsunemimi, it kind of gives me the impulsive idea to place my hands on my head."

Hearing Coppelia's confession, Lily giggled shyly. Although it was not known if it were to be an insult or praise, it seems that the duo had matching personalities.

Lily and Coppelia, who finished their self-introductions, then sat on the chair and started the conversation on the situation surrounding this shop.

"Coppe-chan, may, may I ask."

"Coppe-chan?"

"Aye? Ah, Mhm. Is Coppe-chan the owner of this shop ?"

Coppelia had returned a question due to her surprise from receiving such an intimate nickname out of nowhere but Lily did not pay it any mind and continued with her question. Coppelia's poker expression relaxed for an instant before recovering on her doll-like expression once more to answer the question.

"Yes. My role is to deal with all the activities concerning the sales in this shop. Although it only requires money to seal the trade deal."

"Is that for real?! Then, can this brooch be sold to me ne……!"

Pi!<nowiki> With her Kitsunemimi perked up and eyes shining with excitement, she took out the brooch to show Coppelia. Coppelia silently accepted the brooch and looked down with a slightly troubled expression. "……this, isn't a product to be sold in the shop." "Aye?" "It is just a little carving that I've made to pass time. Hence it has no value what so ever to it. If you want it, you may take it, young fox." Lightly placing it back onto Lily's hands. But the two tails of Lily started to wag with a higher intensity as her gaze sparkled even more. "Coppe, this brooch was made by you?!" "Yes. But it is an inferior piece of work that is an eyesore……" "That's, That's not true! It's a really kawaii brooch!" <nowiki>*Pi!* The kitsunemimi perked up as she gave her praise.

Her innocent eyes showed that there was no underlying intentions or crafty calculations to her words. Feeling touched by the frankness, Coppelia seemed a little troubled as her cheeks were flushed.

While looking at happily at the brooch, Lily suddenly remembered the other thing she had wanted to ask.

"…… Coppe-chan, why are you alone in this shop?"

Asking about the most obvious suspicious thing. But it was something that is supposed to be secret, right? Coppelia's blushing face turned pale and hugged her slender man-made body, causing it to emit a sound.

While suppressing her intense feelings that were straining against her will, Coppelia calmly answered.

"Because….. I was abandoned. It is not by any other, but my father who had planned to create me."

"……Aye?"

—Abandoned by a family member.

Those words struck a chord in Lily's heart.

"Abandoned……by your father……?"

"…… Yes. My raison d'être[47] is my father's love. But that love has been long lost. The fathers who have gathered by my side are only interested in my value. But I've mistakenly taken it as a desire of Mankind for my

existence and continuously wait for the person who can complete me. When such a fated person— clearly won't come for me……!!"

Coppelia broke into tears.

The pain of losing her father's love.

Unable to bear the pain of the degradation of her raison d'être, large droplets of tears flowed from her eyes .

(*Abandoned by her father….. in this shop, alone……!!*)

Although Lily did not know the full story and the reasons, the pain of such a deep loss was one that she understood fully.

Three years ago—when she had to part with her mother.

Lily still remembered how painful the parting had been. The pain of being abandoned by her family would likely to be a deeper and more intense one.

Lily timidly reached over to touch Coppelia's hair, stroking her head to console her.

"It's alright you know? My oka-sama has said it before . No matter how far we are, parents will always think of their children."

"……That is just a fantasy, young fox. This shop is the place where all the abandoned are gathered. If you go further into the shop, you will find that the abandoned are full to the brim."

"So…So it is like that, Mhm."

In a sudden flash—that particular thing appeared in her mind, and Lily was struggling to focus on Coppelia's words.

"Then, the [Geass Roll] that Coppe is holding is,"

"…… That is something prepared to search for the one who can complete me. But that game is—"

Ku! She unnaturally shut her mouth. Lily was unsure what that movement meant. But she understood that she should not let this doll be and ignore the situation.

Holding the hand of Coppelia, who had a sorrowful look in her eyes, Lily pointed to the exit.

"Coppe-chan, let's leave this place. Even if you stay in this sort of place, there is no way for you to meet your new father."

"……I can't do that. If I were to escape…… That will attack……!!"

"No, No problem! If it is the muscled dolls, Izayoi-san will beat them down,"

"No, it's not that……!! This shop is being guarded by a much more terrifying existence……!!!"

Ka Chi Ka Chi The slender body of Coppelia was shaking.

Soon after—*Saa* a dark grey wind blew between the two of them.

Lily tilted her head at the sight of that unnatural and visible wind.

But Coppelia's reaction became more intense.

"Please, Please run away now, young fox!"

"Aye……?"

"That guy…… 'End Emptiness' is coming—!!!"

In an instant, the golden yellow shop house was surrounded by a dark grey wind.

The dark grey winds weathered away everything that made up the luxurious interior, seeming to rampage in its desire to swallow anything that has radiance. The violent winds that were capable of gluttony had immediately engulfed the duo.

—But who would have known.

This Wind is the strongest god killing Demon that is capable of wiping out hundreds of gods and demigods.

The formless Demon Lord called 'End Emptiness'.

The spreading 'natural disaster' in Little Garden has also taken the world as its enemy.

Part 11

The extensively gorgeous decorations of the golden shop interior — had finally materialized its true self as the embodiment of destruction.

Even amongst the Demon Lords, he was the real culprit for their classification as ‘natural disasters’. Because this particular Demon Lord is a ‘natural disaster’ , and it does not have the same goals as the other Demon Lords.

Sometimes, it acted as the logic in a Trial.

Sometimes, it acted as the ravaging wave of trends.

An existence that is summoned from the end of time and leaves towards the direction of our memories.

Known as the Demon Lord ‘End Emptiness’.[48]

It is a formless Demon Lord that causes faith to be abandoned, fear to be forgotten and research to be halted .

It did not matter that one might attempt to bring many noble aspirations to bear against ‘End Emptiness’. These winds would wear those objects and concepts that stand before it into dust as it is the arrival of the ends of time.

This dark grey Wind is the strongest god killing Demon that is capable of wiping out hundreds of gods and demigods.

“Please, Please hurry and escape, young fox!”

Coppelia’s expression was pale as she urged Lily to escape. But it was too late.

This shop had already been thrown into the ends of memories, just like the traces of dreams dreamt by brave warriors. It would require an equivalent price to get out of it—to surpass the trial and display a spiritual power that would never be ravaged by the waves of time.

Those who are not even capable of doing that much will have their souls swallowed up by the gaping jaws of ‘End Emptiness’.

The dark grey winds, which surrounded them from all corners, swooped in to assault the two young girls while baring its fangs.

"……!!"

"—Lily, get down!!"

A yell. The voice of a girl travelled to Lily's ears.

The dark grey wind storm which was violently raking away at the golden shophouse.

Was blocked by a flash of sparkling wings.

"Wha….t, to halt the advancement of 'End Emptiness'?! Who in the world is—-?!"

"Asuka, protect them! Shirayuki, provide cover!"

"Got it!!"

"Understood!"

The two girls landed before a stunned Coppelia.

Pi Lily’s kitsunemimi perked up as she walked over to her two saviors.

“Asuka-san! Yō-san! Even Shirayuki-san! Why have you come to this shop,”

“That’s our line! Why would Lily come to this shop?! Didn’t we say that it is too dangerous for anyone to approach?!”

Receiving a chiding from Asuka, Lily’s kitsunemimi drooped weakly.

Shirayuki and Yō formed a Water twister to push back ‘End Emptiness’. But the flow of water that Shirayuki conjured was rendered ineffective, being dissipated like smoke, even without contact with the dark grey air.

Seeing that sort of bone-chilling phenomenon, Shirayuki turned pale and shouted,

“Ai Ai, what sort of unfortunate day is it?!! I’ve never heard of ‘End Emptiness’ residing in a specific location!!”

“…… ‘End Emptiness’?”

"It's the name of this monster! It also has many other synonymous names in the world of Little Gardens where many gods reside! 'Last Décadence'! 'Greed Crown'! 'The Cannibalistic Demon Lord'! The pure Demon Lord that engulfs the radiance of life, stars and the gods— that is the true face of this wind!!!"[49]

Even as she shouted, Shirayuki continued to release a flow of water. But not only did it not stop the advancement of 'End Emptiness', it also dissipated upon contact and it wasn't a phenomenon of evaporation.

If one were to cite an example— it would be similar to a storm that have the capacity to stomach all that the world's artist palette has to offer. This is precisely that sort of wind.

'End Emptiness' had dyed the waters of Shirayuki into a murky grey.

"Do not touch the winds! These winds will swallow you up even if you have Gifts! Any sort of power will also turn to scrap before it! The instant that you come into contact with it, your spiritual power will undergo abrasion till it completely disappears……!"

Although Shirayuki knew that it was of no use, she continued to release a steady stream of water to protect Asuka and the rest.

On the other hand, Yō was using the shimmering winds produced from the ‘Radiant Winged Horse (Pegasus)” shoes to block the ‘Winds of Decadence’. But it did not work to repulse the onslaught. Just the power of the Pegasus is unable to stop the ‘Winds of Decadence’. After all, this wind is a Demon Lord that only allows a one-sided battle and will not be defeated.[50]

Hence, Yō did not use her power—and was using the attribute of the ‘Winds of Decadence’ to protect the other three.

(— *These dark grey winds seem to rage and ravage at the golden radiance in its gluttonous greed. It would also mean that these winds are also internally programmed to seek the congregation of light.*)

But that was something that she could not confirm with all her certainty. It could only be said of as a desperate act.

If Yō's speculation were to be off its mark, they would be completely swallowed up by the 'Winds of Decadence '.

Facing the raging storm of gluttony, Yō felt cold sweat flow down her back as she took in the sight before her.

(*This is the first time ever……that I'm seeing such a terrifying wind that I wouldn't even dream of getting into contact with……!!!)*

Yō did not know what kind of power the 'Winds of Decadence' held.

But the animal instincts within Yō were able to recognize the evil chills that were prophesying her defeat .

Those winds were a completely different sort of threat from the Demon Lords that they have faced so far, be it the Huge Dragon or the God of Death. If they were to engage in a head-on battle against it, there would be no chance for victory.

When the ‘Winds of Decadence’ started to devour at the shimmering winds, Yō grabbed the hands of the trio to take to the skies.

“Asuka! Lily! And…..you, the one whom I do not know! Hold on tight, we are leaving this shop now!”

“No, you can’t! If I were to leave this shop,”

“I will hear of your reason later! It is of utmost importance to escape now!”

“Mhm! Kasukabe! Lure the ‘Winds of Decadence’ to the depths of the shop!”

Yō gave her best to release a cluster of the shimmering winds to lure the ‘Winds of Decadence’ into the depths of the shop. In response to that radiance, the ‘Winds of Decadence’ had also pursued after the bait like a gluttonous wild beast.

In that interval of respite, the five of them escaped from the golden museum—the prison of memories.

Part 12

— [Underwood], Main Guest Room

The streets of the Great Tree were lively and noisy due to the preparations for the Harvest Festival. And everyone was assembled within the main guest room, which had a view overlooking the large number of faerie folk who reside at the river banks.

When Izayoi was done with the preparations of the salty pumpkin pie and was about to make a trip to the shop, he had coincidentally met Asuka and Yō along the way and decided to hand Shirayuki over to them.

"YareYare…… I left it to you guys because of your spirited talk about having solved the game. Looks like it was a total defeat huh?"

Izayoi sat on a chair in the main guest room and shrugged his shoulders while mocking Asuka and the others. Although Asuka and Yō pouted their lips, they were unable to retort and decided to remain silent.

The five of them were then gathered in the main guest room with Izayoi and Garol.

After listening to the whole incident, a change came over the expressions of the duo.

With a brief soft whispered conversation between Garol and Izayoi, Garol then put on an especially serious look to gaze at Asuka and gang.

"…… I understand the situation now. It means that this doll is the target of the 'Winds of Decadence' right?"

"Mhm."

"Then that makes things simple. Immediately return that doll to the shop right now."

Garol immediately made his judgement in an imperative tone.

Lily's kitsunemimi perked up agitatedly in protest.

"How can we do that?! IF we return Cope-chan to the shop now, she will be in danger!"

"It will probably be that way. But at this current state, the whole region of [Underwood] would be in threatened and dragged into the whole incident. ……In addition, our opponent is the 'Winds of Decadence'. And it can be said to be one of the highest threats of natural disaster in the world of Little Garden. It is already assumed to be a

monster that is deemed to be an undefeatable opponent, so what do you ladies want to do?"

"Bu, But……!"

Lily's kitsunemimi trembled as she wagged her two tails in her intense protest. But a normal girl like her would not be able to come up with a counter measure for that sort of situation. And soon enough, her kitsunemimi and two tails drooped in silent disappointment.

Shirayuki also had a serious look but there was a slight difference to it.

"Strictly speaking, there is a way to chase away the ' Winds of Decadence'."

"Is that true?!"

"Uh, Mhm…… Fox girl, do you remember the color of the wind?"

Color? She tilted her head slightly as she countered with a question.

Shirayuki maintained her serious expression as she supplemented the explanation.

"The 'Winds of Decadence' is a Demon Lord that will have a change in its color in relation to its different power level. Black would mean that it is at its strongest while white would be at its weakest. The one that we met was at a shade of dark grey —I think we can assume it to be at the level of the five digits."

"Five digits……?"

"It is unable to ravage the low level spiritual powers. …… No, there's a difference. To be accurate, it is more acceptable to say that 'it does not allow the gluttony'."

Seeming to speak to herself, Shirayuki mumbled softly .

Seeing Lily who was getting more confused by the moment, she pretended to cough before turning to face the others.

"The main thing is— 'we need to have a Flag above that level to chase off those winds'."

"Ah, that's……!"

—not possible. Lily forcefully swallowed the words that were about to come out of her mouth.

A Community that is above the five digits would be a Community based in the upper echelons of Little Garden . The current [No Name] was one that was unable to borrow their flag based on previous relations.

Lily gripped the hand of Coppelia, who was bending her head in silence, while looking to Izayoi for help as she pinned her last hopes on him.

“Izayoi-san…… is there no other way?”

“__”

Izayoi crossed his arms as he allowed his consciousness to recede into the depths of his thoughts.

But he already knew the answer in his heart. If it is just as Garol says, that the ‘Winds of Decadence’ is an undefeatable monster, Izayoi was also doubtful about his ability to defeat it.

Be it the Star class spirit Algor, Death God Percher or even the Sun Dragon, he who had never felt a tinge of fear from those was now feeling uneasy about that sensation of ‘a certain something’ which was a class above all those.

Even if that is the case, if one were to continue in the attempt to save Coppelia—

"…… then we can only clear the game, is it?"

"Aye?"

"Oi, Garol Oji-san. The 'Winds of Decadence' is a Demon Lord summoned to act as the logic of Gift Games right?"

"…… Mhm. From what I know, the game this time is of that sort of classification."

"Good. Then comes Ojou-sama. Do you have Deen with you now?"

"Of course. But it is currently in the state of a destroyed single arm. An intense battle would be…"

"It is fine. I do not intend for it to go into battle. What's left to confirm is—."

Turning to face and grab Coppelia.

The silver haired girl continued to look down and not meet Izayoi's gaze— but Izayoi forcefully cupped Coppelia's face to lift it up.

Staring at the blue eyes at a close distance, Izayoi narrowed his gaze to observe it.

"Oi, you stupid doll. When are you going to quit sulking? Everyone's here to discuss the problem of your situation, you know?"

"…… situation or whatever it is, there's no need to discuss for you to know the answer as clear as day. As long as you return me to the prison of memories, it will be solved."

"Ah Ah, right. That is the simplest and safest method. Ask a hundred individuals and a hundred would give that same safest course of action. Because even I'm thinking of it as the best method for this case."

"Then,"

"But, you know? The little fox girl of my Community[51] will never be able to accept that."

Wha, Coppelia turned to look at Lily.

The silent but unbending will was transmitted through the action of the tight grip of the young fox girl's hand over her own.

No problem— we will definitely save you.

"…… but it is impossible to clear the game! It means to clear the business of completing 'me'! There have been many a hundred and even thousands who have researched and taken the challenge but are still unable to succeed. Because the 'me' is the final fantasy of the dream of Mankind—"

"The third perpetual motion mechanism. Although it was assumed to be workable, but it was taken to be an effort of building castles in the air and it was soon abandoned as a decadent theory of motion."[52]

Is that right? Izayoi smiled triumphantly while Coppelia was stumped, wide eyed and in shock.

But the ones who were more surprised by the unravelling of the riddle, were Asuka and Yō who had been listening quietly.

"Ah, Ara?"

"…… Isn't the answer to the Game, the Third Perpetual motion machine?"

"You are mistaken. The real answer to the game is the completion of the third perpetual motion machine. It is also precisely that, which cause the game to have no answer…… a Trial that cannot be surpassed. Hence it is what we call the 'Game of Paradox'."

In the world of Little Garden where many gods and deities gather, to set the answer as an uncompleted technique would not be breaking the rules.

Take for example the creation of the perpetual motion machine that has a paradoxical production process in the techniques. If it were to be incomplete, it would be seen to be a failure. In a lure and trap game, this would undoubtedly be the most horrid type.

Coppelia took on a lonely look as Izayoi's figure was reflected in her eyes which were filled with self-blame.

"Is that so……You were summoned from the twenty first century huh. Then you should know about it right? The end of the Mankind's dream for the perpetual machine."

"……Aahh. About that point, I will offer you some sympathy."

Izayoi released his hold and quietly nodded.

His voice had become gentle and perhaps this was his way of showing compassion.

—The third perpetual motion machine.

As the name suggests, it is a machine that is able to function indefinitely.

The final fantasy that mankind had faith of accomplishing by themselves.

It had become the highest peak of attainment for the masses of inventors who aspired for the accompanied wealth and glory that it would bring. However,

following the change in the times, the perpetual motion machine had fallen to become a delusional project.

In Izayoi's time of the twenty first century, the perpetual motion machine has already been taken as technique similar to building castles in the skies. Hence there were only a few who would aspire towards it.

Even though there continues to be people who chase after the project, they are by no means inventors who aspire towards the dream but are mostly con artists who hope to take advantage of this sweet dream of the perpetual motion machine. The dreams of those who actually believed in its existence have now transformed into a cash cow for a few evil doers.

She who had been known as the final point of mankind—the perpetual motion machine, Coppelia and her honor, glory and raison d'être were then sullied by the muddy footprints of those tainted by greed.

"The residue of the radiance in wealth and glory…. That is the true face of 'me'. The existence of 'me' is a paradox in itself. With my existence as the premise, and given the name of a perpetual motion machine, I was

prepared to be the Gift of the Trial and the existence that cannot be completed. Becoming the indefinite buffet bait for its insatiable gluttony.

To stop the 'Winds of Decadence', one can only attempt to clear the game and obtain the radiance of the perpetual motion machine—"

"That's why I already said that I will give that radiance to you."

—Wha? This time, Coppelia was truly speechless.

Izayoi gave a mischievous smile as he flicked at Coppelia's forehead to proclaim.

"You stupid doll, what do you think this world is? It is the world of Little Garden, the playground that gathers all the gods and deities. The perpetual motion machine is definitely unattainable by the hands of Mankind alone… … but if we used Gifts, it might just become a similar existence."

"wha….?"

Coppelia pressed onto her red and swollen forehead as her gaze wavered in surprise.

Standing at akimbo, Izayoi declared to Coppelia.

"From today onwards, you will not be the perpetual motion machine Coppelia. But the new doll that [No Name] has created— Divine craft Perpetual machine Coppelia."

Part 13

—Crevice at the [Underwood] Harvest Festival Bazaar.

It was the time when the new moon had risen to its zenith.

There was an emergency evacuation order issued to the Harvest Festival Bazaar section and the still atmosphere reigned the surroundings currently. Despite the fact that it should have been the liveliest moment of the Harvest Festival's Eve, the Great Tree City was silent, as if asleep. The only sounds that could be heard on the

streets were that of the gurgling waters of the river and the rustle of leaves on the Great Tree.

In the heart of the Bazaar, which was difficult for one to associate with the Bazaar that was still being prepared just moments ago, there stood Kasukabe Yō, Shirayuki and the little fox girl, Lily.

"There's still an hour to a day before the 'Winds of Decadence' spews out of the museum. Until Coppelia is complete, we will have to stop it."

"Oi, don't make it sound so simple. Even if it isn't in its strongest state, that is still a pure Demon Lord, you know?"

Shirayuki looked as if she had just drawn the unluckiest fortune slip as she glared at Yō spitefully.

Busily wagging her tail that went pitter patter, Lily looked at them apologetically.

"I'm really sorry…… I didn't think that it would come to this."

Lily's kitsunemimi were pressed flat against her head which was bending to look at the ground. Taken aback

that her words were taken to be a complaint in annoyance for a drudgery, Shirayuki placed her hands on her hips while shaking her head to deny the assumption.

“Even if I may say so, that is not something that you should be apologizing for. …… Mhm. If I were to say it truthfully, it is quite admirable. That sort of chivalrous heart to fight for one’s friend is something that I would rate highly.”

Expressing her admiration, Shirayuki placed her hand on Lily’s head while stroking it together with the kitsunemimi, causing it to produce a soothing rustling sound.

Yō smiled at that scene, but slightly resumed her tensed expression.

“I will be counting on you guys to follow the plan then . Escape if it becomes dangerous. I will just handle the rest.”

“Mhm, you are the last line of defense. Don’t fail, okay ?”

“Yō-san, we will count on you for the rest then!”

Pi Energetically perking her kitsunemimi and giving a bow.

Just when the trio were confirming their roles, there came a low rumble like a tremor originating from the crevice in the bazaar.

Part 14

—[Underwood] Underground workshop.

“……Although we did talk about it the other time, it seems like we are still the ones to do the work, huh?”

Let’s rewind the time a little, the location is at the Underground workshop.

The one spoke was the strategist[53] under the Flag of the Azure Flames, Jack o’ Lantern of [Will O’ Wisp], as they were below ground of the Great Tree.

Hearing the story from Izayoi, he bobbled his pumpkin head while turning his head left and right to look at Coppelia and the other doll— the Red Iron Doll crafted from Rare Sacred Iron, Deen.

Placing part of Deen's fragments into the furnace, Jack gave a laugh in surprise.

"But to actually think of creating a perpetual motion machine mechanism? That's a really unexpended request . I will state it now that I'm just a metal smith, you know? "

"I know that. But there isn't any other Community for us to entrust this task to. Moreover, that also applies to the unavailability of Communities who can succeed in the project. …… You do know of the theories behind the perpetual motion machine mechanism right?"

In contrast to Izayoi's challenging speech, Jack replied in a calm manner.

"About that. Hm, I do remember that it is a ' mechanism that will continue to function without an input of energy from the outside', am I right? But that is due to the laws of thermodynamics……After the law of

entropy was established, wasn't it concluded as an impossible task?"

"Regarding that point, as long as we utilise the rare metals of Little Garden, the problem would be solved. This is because Deen is the real life example of that."

Yahoho? Jack tilted his pumpkin head as he pondered over it.

Asuka, who was awaiting orders, had also tilted her head as she asked Izayoi.

"Well, that…Izayoi-san, what do you mean?"

"It is just a simple theory. Ojou-sama, do you know of the principles behind the operation of a steam powered vehicle?"

"Don't underestimate me that much. I still know of that sort of trivial stuff. ……Well about that, it uses the heat and pressure to move the wheels right?"

"That's right. The steam powered vehicle's engine is powered by the difference in temperature created from the burning of coal and it causes the piston to move. However, if there isn't a difference in temperature, the

piston will be unable to move and it results in a cut off of energy. This is the famous second law of thermodynamics. Also known as the principle of entropy .”

“…… Ye, Yeah I guess.”

Using an obscure response to pull herself through. This must have been slightly too much for a fifteen year old girl representing the Showa era to understand.

Izayoi bit back his bitter smile to turn his focus back to Jack to continue the topic.

“But if we were to use the Rare Sacred Iron, the problem would be solved. If I were to say why, it would be the attributes of that metal that allows it to extend and contract at will. If the most important component, the piston, were to be replaced by a material that had the characteristic of extending and contracting at will, it would be possible to create a simple design for the perpetual motion mechanism.”

Don! Jack hammered his fist on his palm as he nodded in understanding.

"Yahohoho! I get it now! If the structure were to be simplified to that extent, it would be no problem at all to leave the task of refining the metals to me!"

"Mhm. I will also provide some suggestions by the side for the structure and component crafting. The only problem left is…… whether Ojou-sama is willing to agree or not."

Flashing a sidelong glance at Asuka. In Izayoi's hands were the shards of rare sacred metal chipped off from Deen's battle with the Huge Dragon. It would seem that it was a request for the permission to use a part of those shards.

The spiritual power level of the Rare Sacred Metal items were determined by the volume of its biggest expansion. Even if it were to be a few shards taken from it, the spiritual power of Deen would be reduced in the same small proportion.

"Hu……Is that the reason why you needed Deen?"

"Yes. Because if we do not have Ojou-sama's permission, we will not be able to get to work. …… So, what do you say?"

Slightly unwilling, Asuka gave a sigh.

Seeing that, Jack gave a thumbs up as he thought of a good idea.

“Then let’s do it this way. In return for the permission to use the Sacred Rare Iron from Asuka-san, Izayoi-san will have to take on the whole cost of repairing Deen. What do you think about that?”

“Wha?”

In the face of such a sudden suggestion, the involved parties gave a cry in surprise.

The reaction of Asuka was especially larger. Her unsatisfied expression from before was changed as she gripped Jack’s hand to exclaim excitedly.

“Could it be that Deen can be repaired?!”

“Yahohoho! That’s a simple task! Although the additional refinery of the Rare Sacred Iron is a little troublesome, it should be alright to get it done within a month!…… Mah, but it will just have a considerable amount charged for it.”

— Flashing a sidelong glance at Izayoi.

At this end, albeit having a disgruntled expression and scratching his head, but since the person who had requested was none other than Izayoi himself, he raised his hands in defeat as he gave a bitter smile.

"OK, got it. If you do not mind the payment to be made later, I will take on the whole cost."

"Yahohoho! Of course, it is of no problem! We accept the method of payment in a one off full payment or even a thirty six installment system."

Jack bobbled his pumpkin head as he laughed heartily. It might even be possible that the one who got the most out of it is this pumpkin head monster.

On the other hand, Coppelia was lying on a chair in the workshop, waiting quietly for the operation to begin.

(*Rare Sacred Iron….. The iron that retracts as willed. If it were to be utilized, it would no doubt complete the perpetual motion machine mechanism. Even though that would not be counted as a lone accomplishment by Mankind.*)

Shaking her head, seemingly in an attempt to rid herself of all the unhappy feelings in her heart.

It wasn't the time to be concerned about those stuff. The current priority is to chase away the 'Winds of Decadence'. As long as that is not accomplished, she did not have the qualification to ponder about the future.

(*Young fox. It's just as you said. I've always prayed for the fated person to find 'me'. But if I really wanted to realize my dream…… it should be 'me' looking for my fated person.*)

For that, she would abandon her own reserved attitude.

She needed to escape the shackles of the glory in the distant past.

Now was the time for her to leave the prison of memories to move onwards on her own.

"Then, it is time for the modifications, have you prepared yourself, Coppelia-san?"

"—yes. I will be in your care, Pumpkin smith."

Part 15

Currently at the Harvest Festival's bazaar, the rampaging tyrant's low roar echoed from the depths of the area.

This Demon Lord did not have any goals or sanity.

Yō and Shirayuki instantly entered their combat stances as they watched the depths of the Crevice.

"…… It's coming. Both of you, be prepared!"

Obeying Yō's orders, Shirayuki and Lily lighted the torches in the vicinity.

The bazaar which was lighted by the lights casted by the torches illuminated the large amounts of combustible materials and wood that were stockpiled at the sides.

"The wind has an attribute of seeking light! Try your best to make it disperse and shave away at its strength!"

"Got it!

"Understood!"

With that, the trio dispersed in different directions. Lily continuously ran to light the wood smeared with oil while Shirayuki headed to the small hill of waste wood.

Equipping her Pegasus leg guards, Yō cloaked herself in a glittery wind to take to the skies.

To disperse the winds in from left, right, up and down, it would only slightly reduce the damage wrought by the 'Winds of Decadence'.

(*In the worst case scenario, Garol said that he would bring Coppelia back to the shop. We got to buy more time to prevent that end*.)

Looking towards the observation deck of [Underwood] from the skies, it was the place where Garol was observing them. In the case that Yō, Lily or any others were to be in danger of being caught by the winds, he would immediately take action.

To prevent the situation from progressing to that point , Yō needed to command the duo.

(……*Here it comes!*)

From a tremor that quaked the earth to an explosion, the Demon Lord, who devoured all of the radiance in the shop, showed itself as it blew apart the black doors to stream out from the crevice in the land.

Just the aftershock of that blast was enough to cause the crevice to collapse and the gluttonous 'Winds of Decadence' erased all traces of the earth that came into contact with it. However, it would seem that devouring more earth would not be able to sate its hunger.

"Aye……?!"

"It's actually……?!"

Lily and Shirayuki, who were lighting up the combustible materials continuously, gave cries of surprise.

Wanting to possess and have a taste of that blinding radiance emitted by the Pegasus boots, the 'Winds of Decadence' ignored the puny lights of the bonfires and zoomed in on Yō as its prey.

The unexpected turn of events caused Yō to panic but she knew that she should not remain in her original location in a daze.

Immediately manoeuvring in the air, she unleashed the shimmering winds in all directions.

“In this situation……!”

What should I do? Yō used all her might to lure the ‘ Winds of Decadence’ into her waltz.

Unfortunately, the effect was too little. Even if it did manage to disperse it somewhat, the aggressiveness of the ‘Winds of Decadence’ in its pursuit only increased. Hence Yō finally realized the real aim of the enemy.

(*This wind…… is trying to devour me!!*)

No matter how blinding her shimmering winds are, they were all insubstantial and devoured like fog, unable to appease its hunger. Having had its appetizer in the form of the golden museum, the gluttonous winds were lusting after the shimmering winds that was decided to be the prey for the main dish.

In this sort of direct confrontation, it would only be a matter of suicide.

Understanding that the situation was not advantageous for her, Yō turned tail to run from the ‘ Winds of Decadence’.

“This, This is bad! If she is targeted, she will not be able to escape!”

“Yō-san……!!!”

The two gave similarly pained cries.

Yō, who was chased by the rapidly nearing threat behind her back, was also shivering from the thoughts of the end that shall befall if she were to be caught by the wind. Dying without a trace as her body would be devoured to nothingness.

She released her shimmering winds towards her back with all her remaining strength. But to the ‘Winds of Decadence’, this was only an exaggerated show of might that only needed to be dyed with its own color and destroyed before discarding.

(*I was too naïve……! Even if it did not have any intellect, this wind is also a Demon Lord……!!!*)

Yō ran till her forehead was streaming with perspiration but the distance between them continued to close rapidly.

(*I can't make it…… It's inevitable—!!!*)

In the instant that the fingers of Death were to be clamped onto Yō's head.

The fiercely pursued target of the dark grey winds disappeared.

"—Oi Oi. That's too early to give up, Kasukabe!!"

The figure that moved at a speed sufficient to combust the air in the atmosphere had used the branch of the Great Tree as a foothold to make the full powered jump.

Izayoi then landed with Yō in his arms with a force sufficient to shake the 500 meter Great Tree.

Standing like a Nio in the large crater, Izayoi gave Yō a mocking smile.

"Aiyaya, that really scared me. Because Kasukabe gave people the impression of having more guts than that. I really didn't expect you to be so quick at cutting off that bravado."

"……Mu. If Izayoi thinks that way, why not try having yourself chased by that?"

"Well, I will politely decline that offer. Although it is just a glance, I see that it truly is a little different. I would not want to have a direct confrontation with it. — Moreover, all the players have assembled."

Izayoi looked towards the sky. The dark grey storm that was fiercely pursuing up till a moment ago had collected itself into a slow billowing clump.

Directing its will to look at the observation deck of [Underwood].

The formless Demon Lord was looking at— with a brilliant head of silver hair that waved in the wind, the azure blue eyed Coppelia stood at that location.

"Sorry to make everyone wait. The operation has safely ended. And—"

Coppelia unfurled the goatskin parchment.

At the same moment that the goatskin parchment [Geass Roll] radiated a blinding light, it also underwent a tremendous change to become a huge Flag that flew above [Underwood].

"—The game is cleared. 'End Emptiness", you do not have the means to destroy me anymore……!!"

Emblazoned on the Red based cloth of the Flag were the overlapping design of Gears and the petals of a budding fantasy.

That flag was the evidence of immense wealth and glory.

Representing the undying petals of Mankind's last fantasy.

The Flag of the Community— [Last Embryo]

"Depart with haste, 'End Emptiness'. The 'paradox Game' of — the never ending dream of 'me' has ended. If you continue to show your presence here, you will be

seen to be breaking the rules. Even if you are an undefeatable Demon Lord, you will still be hard pressed in escaping the fate of being chased out of Little Garden.

Coppelia emitted a silvery radiance as she announced calmly. There was not a shred of melancholy and it was just as though the dream doll that mankind have dreamed off in the past was now standing before them.

The formless Demon Lord stopped in the airspace above the city, shifting restlessly like its balance had been thrown off.

— Indeed, the contract had ended. But it would seem that this whole region was about to become mountain load of food.

Suppressing its havoc, the movements were similar to the licking of one’s lips, just like an internal struggle against its hideous desires.

Want to eat,

Want to eat,

Want to eat. Its stance was similar to a hunting dog that was salivating.

Looking up from the city and noticing that stance, Izayoi couldn’t bear it anymore as he clicked his tongue and roared.

“OI, You formless Demon Lord-sama. If you try to tear up the agreement and go on a one-sided rampage— we on this end will also be using a similar rule breaking ability to mete judgement on you, alright?

Instantly, a bright light was emitted from Izayoi’s right hand.

The light from his hand was comparable to the intensity of the Sun and it illuminated the whole city in the night.

Even though the Dark grey Demon Lord was a little disturbed by the unexpected radiance, it did not seem to withdraw its presence. Instead, that presence was gradually filled with a sense of joy.

—A special dish was found this time. The Demon Lord that was, logically speaking, without a form had laughed .

In the instant that did not even feel like a fraction of a second, it seem to give the feeling of having smiled in that storm but it disappeared without a trace in the next second.

Just as ‘End Emptiness’ swelled up, it then shot off in a straight light towards the centre of Little Garden—leaving towards the world Axis.

The path of ‘End Emptiness’ ripped through the sea of clouds and swallowed the starlight from amongst the clouds.

“……I guess this marks an end to this business, right?”

“I guess, so?”

Yō echoed Izayoi’s words. Although the situation had gone out of expectations, but the damage was limited to its smallest and there could be no better result than that. Izayoi stood akimbo as he looked up at the starry skies with a satisfied look while slowly shifting his gaze towards [Underwood].

Seeing the eternal buds emblazoned on the flag of [Last Embryo], he mumbled in an emotional moment.

"A perpetual motion mechanism…. Eh? Ha, although it is said to be abandoned, it sure is ridiculous. Because Mankind who had struggled to make those petals bloom have already built the twenty-first century.

Izayoi narrowed his eyes as he reminisced his past.

—The huge hydroelectric facility that towered over the Iguazu Falls which he had seen during his younger days.

To recycle the energy of the great river that circulates the planet to convert it into a form of energy for the illumination of the streets. That sort of technique is only something that Man can achieve only through the basics found in the pursuing of the perpetual motion mechanism dream.

Perhaps it is not possible to create the perpetual motion mechanism by Man's abilities alone. But with the accompaniment of great will and the prosperity of the years, that radiance of the flag would not be too exaggerating to be called the radiance obtained by Man. Just as he was filled with the emotions from watching the [Last Embryo]'s flag, he noticed the figures of Lily and Shirayuki rushing over from the distance.

"Izayoi-san—! Yō-san—! Are you two alright—?!"

"Oh, we are alright over here."

"Although it was a little dangerous."

Panting as she ran over, Lily wagged her tails with a pitter pattering sound.

Letting Yō off from his arms, Izayoi then spread his arms in a smile.

"Okay, now that the problematic stuff is resolved, to substitute the celebratory dinner, would you guys like to have some Pumpkin Salty Pie?"

Part 16

—[Underwood], VIP Quarters

The group who repulsed the 'Winds of Decadence' were having a happy conversation in the VIP quarters while getting a serving of Izayoi's baked Pumpkin Salty Pie as their dinner.

The warm moist and fragrant smell was enough to relax anyone's cheeks. Identifying the grilled white cow cheese within the pastry, Yō's eyes were sparkling as she looked at the crust of the pie.

"Ooh~…… This is packs a punch. Looks like this is much tastier than the Pumpkin Salty Pie you made yesterday."

"Of course. That's because all the ingredients are the choicest picks of the Harvest Festival ingredient supplies."

"Yahohoho! It's because of the ripe pumpkin that we have provided as well! Of course it would be tasty!"

Izayoi responded with a loud laugh while Jack replied with a proud laugh of a Yahoho.

Lily, who sliced up the Pumpkin Salty Pie into divisions, handed a slice to Coppelia on a plate.

"Here, Coppelia's plate."

"Thank you, young fox. ……It's all thanks to you that I get to be here, having this meal with everyone."

"No, that's not true! Izayoi-san and Yō-san were the ones who helped you."

"That's not true. Although I would really want to repay the debt…… but the embarrassing thing is that the only possession that I have is this body of mine. It will be my pleasure if you have something that I can help out with."

Coppelia bowed her head as she touched her chest with a troubled look.

But Lily's eyes sparkled and her kitsunemimi perked up,

"Then, I would like you to sell me that brooch! I have someone in mind whom that accessory would really match, I would like to gift it to that person as a present!"

"But, young fox, that brooch…. If it were to be given a price, it would be quite a sum, you know? Because the material that the brooch was carved from was a piece of divine wood."

Uu, Lily felt silent as she began to look troubled. Seeing her like that, Garol spoke up to offer a solution.

"There's no way around it then. If kitsune ojou-chan is willing, I can help you find a few jobs, you know? Another helping hand is always welcomed in the hosting of the Harvest Festival."

"Ye Yes, I'm really thankful!"

Pi! Her kitsunemimi perked up. Lily turned to face Coppelia,

"My oka-san has always taught me that we need to pay an equivalent price for another's efforts. Since the crafter of the brooch is Coppelia, if I do not pay an equivalent price for it, I would be turning my back on my teachings."

Mhm! She clenched her fists spiritedly.

Bowing her head in embarrassment, Coppelia gave a smile to seal the deal.

As everyone were seated at the dining table with a plate of salty pie before them and at the instant when their hands were clasped in prayer— the situation took a sudden turn.

"Wuaaaahhhh! There are rampaging strong men dolls AAAAAaaahhhhhhhhhh!!!"

"——CHARGE WUOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

The belligerent cries of that sort were sounding throughout the Underground City.

As Izayoi stopped in his act of delivering the salty pie to his mouth, he turned his cold gaze to Coppelia.

"…… Oi, that mass of muscles aren't a part of the Game?"

"That's a nice joke. Those are just the materialization of a certain item that has been released into the realms of the memory."

"Houeh. Then they are of your kind?"

"…… That is a really interesting joke you have, Mister. Even if you are my benefactor, I will not ignore that sort of insulting comment."

"Then that's really interesting. Show me a little power of that perpetual motion machine. The Game will be called <<~The Strong Men difficulty level Hunt~On the eve of the Harvest Festival>> How does that sound?"

Although annoyed as she was, Coppelia nodded her head at Izayoi's suggestion.

Still in the position of 'almost taking a bite' of the salty pie, Asuka and Yō sighed in annoyance.

"That game…… could it be that we need to turn up for it as well?"

"At, At least let us finish the pumpkin salty pie before, "

"Stop talking nonsense. Of course, the female camp will have to make an appearance as well."

"Bu, But……!!!"

Izayoi grabbed the collars of the desperately struggling duo and wearily dragged them to the window,

"No matter which world it is and of any time period, great men have always said this— 'Those who do not work, do not get to eat'—-Here!"

And threw them from the branch of the Great Tree into the crowd of strong men.

The Off-topic Gossip 2

Part 1

"Wuah~…… They are surprisingly lively even during the times that Kuro Usagi did not know of."

Kuro Usagi, who had just read the activity logs of the [Underwood] saga, exclaimed in admiration as she nibbled at the cake which was her tea snack.

Although it was a little disappointing that it did not have the details of the tea gathering in the activity logs, it did not mean to say that it was the last of the tea gatherings. Kuro Usagi clenched her fist as she vowed to join in on the next one.

"But, the perpetual motion mechanism…… to actually use an unorthodox style to complete one of the [Last Trials of Humanity (Last Embryo)]. It sure is a really frightening talent."

"Aiya, you are completely right on that!"

Doink! A petite figure fell from above. It is not known where she had appeared from but the small girl who had appeared, leapt into Kuro Usagi's chest.

Perking her Usagimimi in surprise, Kuro Usagi was given a fright by the sudden change in the situation.

“Shiro, Shiroyasha-sama?! Why did you return to your appearance of a small child?!”

“Hmph Hmph, a celestial class spirit has no actual body. It was just the side effect of having returned the Divinity and getting back my own spiritual power that caused me to become my larger self. If I want to, I can also transform myself into a baby, a beautiful girl or even a high school girl as well.”

“Ha, Haah.”

A Shiroyasha in her child form and Kuro Usagi who was too unenergetic to give a proper reply.

While groping Kuro Usagi’s chest, Shiroyasha seated herself onto the table, where she was whacked twice and thrice, before picking up the report.

“The Perpetual motion mechanism, Coppelia. Although it has been missing for hundreds of years……

we never thought that it would be sealed by the 'Winds of Decadence'. It's no wonder that we have not been able to find a lead on its whereabouts."

"YES. I initially thought that it might have followed in the footsteps of the other 'Last Trials of Humanity' and fallen to become a Demon Lord."

"Mhm. But it sure is good to have this sort of ending rather than that kind of development that you mentioned . If she really did fall to be a Demon Lord, she would be the newest threat alongside 'The Closed-off World (Dystopia)', 'Absolute Evil (Azi Dahaka)' and 'Winds of Decadence (End Emptiness)'. That is something we must absolutely avoid."

They then exchanged a special look with each other. The titles that Shiroyasha had just mentioned as examples of the Demon Lord kinds were all feared as the Ancient Demon Lords. To be mentioned as a threat on par to any of them would be more than just another object in the pool. The coincidental meeting of Izayoi's gang with the 'Winds of Decadence' was one that possessed the potential for a huge catastrophe if they had even a slight misstep. The title of the strongest God Killer isn't just another nickname.

If there exists people who can resist them in the low levels, that would mean—

"……Shiroyasha-sama, do you really need to go back to the upper levels no matter what?"

"Mhm. This is something that is already decided. Although I may look like a highly dependable visually stunning bishoujo currently, "The heavens also dictate (I'm)" to be a corner of the "Last Trials of Humanity". If I'm not residing in a fixed location, it might just mess up the existing Celestial laws."

"Bu, But…… if Shiroyasha-sama isn't here to provide protection, would the lower levels still continue to survive?"

Her Usagimimi bending down, she continued to hug her chest in unease.

It goes to say that Shiroyasha's protection was just that sort of overwhelming importance.

It is all thanks to this absolutely strong Ancient Demon Lord's might that allowed the East Side to pass its days with stability in the region. To have this mighty protective umbrella leaving their side, would they be

enough to protect the peace? That was something that Kuro Usagi couldn't help worrying about.

"…… Hu~. Kuro Usagi yo, come over here for a while."

Sensing the unease in Kuro Usagi, Shiroyasha pulled her hand as she walked over to the balcony.

Pointing at the setting sun, Shiroyasha used an unprecedented serious tone to speak of her teachings.

"Listen well, Kuro Usagi. Look at that patch of yellow hues of the evening. Just like there is no day when the Sun does not set, there is nothing in this world that exists eternally. Regarding that point, the "White Night (me)" also works the same way. Even I have lost thrice in my eternal life span. Even I was forced to make an agreement for the sun to set every day."

"……"

"The first defeat, gave rise to the division of Day and Night in the world. The second defeat gave a distinctive division of the Sun's three sectors. …… The third defeat was inevitable. Even "The heavens also dictate (my)" spiritual power was to be ravaged. Oh my, I'm just sorry that it has to be that way."

Staring at the setting sun, while suppressing her giggles. Shiroyasha, who sat on the rails of the balcony, reached out her hand to gently stroke Kuro Usagi's Usagimimi.

The Sun's protection isn't eternal. But the things that exist from the care of such a Gift. —-That would be you guys of [No Name], KuroUsagi."

"Uu, Shiroyasha-sama……!"

"Fufu. Although I might say that, the seeds that I've sown isn't just limited to you guys! [Salamandra], [Dragon Greif] and the Alliance of [Onii-Hime]. In addition to the [Great Sage of Maelstroms] who will be newly appointed to office of the East Side! If we were to add the up and coming [No Name], the peace of the lower levels could be said to be as stable as Mt. Tai! So, just be rest assured!"

Shiroyasha flicked open her fan as she laughed loudly.

Holding Kuro Usagi's hand, they gradually floated up to fly to a height that allowed them a clear view of the entire [No Name] territory before giving a nod with a laugh.

"When an unprecedented enemy appears, just unite your strengths at that time. The path that you guys have walked will then become the truest Gift. As long as it retains its true radiance, it should become the strongest weapon capable of piercing through Demon Lords."

"Kuro Usagi and friends'…..path……?"

"Mhm. There is no other threat as unreasonable as that to the Demon Lords. To possess a courage and unbending will in great numbers, it is going to be a power that is very frightening. This is a promise that I can give to you, as a person who has experienced it, so that should be correct without a doubt."

Muahahaha! Shiroyasha laughed while imitating a Demon Lord.

Kuro Usagi was uneasy no more as she quietly listened to Shiroyasha's teachings.

"YES! For that moment, Kuro Usagi will work hard to conquer the Communities of the East North and South with [No Name]!"

"Mhm, that's the spirit! Then, I guess it is almost time for us to go to the farewell gathering!"

"YES! The time is just right for us to go to the farewell plaza"

—below? Saying up to that point, she suddenly felt a chill run up her back.

Reconfirming her body condition, Kuro Usagi gazed down at the centre of the plaza for the farewell gathering.

The people who have come to say their farewells to Shiroyasha had packed the streets and the crowd snaked in all directions as far as her eye could see.

"This is the last party that I, Shiroyasha have hosted! From this moment onwards, let's start the seven day and night free to eat and play party! Are you ready, Kuro Usagi?!"

"Wait— Give Kuro Usagi a moment!"

"No, I won't wait!"

"Wait a moment! Are we going down? Are we really going down there?!! At least let Kuro Usagi go down by herself"

"Here you goooooooo!!! I, can, flyyyyyyyyyyyy—-!!!"

Shiroyasha released her hand and the desperate cries of Kuro Usagi echoed in the farewell plaza.

Part 2

—-Just as Shiroyasha had announced, the party continued for the entire span of seven days and seven nights. Communities of all sizes have gathered for the last farewell and all felt sorry for this parting.

While giving thanks to every Community for their troubles and contributions, Shiroyasha also gave them the same words that she told to Kuro Usagi.

—Gather your flags and unite as one.

That is the only weapon capable of defeating the threat of one who vows not to tolerate the existence of his enemy. Leaving that piece of advice behind, the strongest guardian had taken her leave.

Afterwords

Aiya, I will not accept this. “Ending with such a tone again?!” That is just a reason to lie to people right? I am really sorry about this and I have reflected upon it! (dogeza)

Actually, this was supposed to be released together with the OAD and the volume was set to be a series of short stories when it hits the market. But what would happen to the ending of the first volume that would be

left hanging in nowhere? After thinking about it, I decided to use the style and method of half the main story and half the short stories.

For those who feel that this isn't enough, please have a read of the short story collection volume of << Mondaiji-tachi series>> that is set to be released on the 25th anniversary of Kadokawa publications on the first of September while waiting for the next volume. It would really make me happy if you could do that.

In the next volume! This time for real! The story will have a major major major major major major major major development, so please keep your anticipation for its arrival.

Then, let's meet again at the start of winter.

Taro Tatsunoko

Translator's Notes

1. ↑ Something you'd see before you die
2. ↑ Avesta, the holy book of Zoroastrianism, Iran's most ancient literature. This masterpiece of the era is a book, although difficult to determine, but at least can be traced back to ten centuries ago. Adequately reflecting this ancient classics is their venerable ancestor the heroic, courageous, pure, honest, tolerant and optimistic virtue, reflecting their world view on all things wise, and show them to the world prosperity and happiness of human life while fighting off enthusiasm
3. ↑ The name is supposed to be Amalthea, but arranged to not actually say her name. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalthea_(mythology);
4. ↑ Founded by prophet Zoroaster, the religion is said to be as old as Hinduism. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism
5. ↑ The Japanese name for Indra
6. ↑ A common phrase in Japanese used to pacify others. Its other definition would be ‘so-so’ which makes no sense in this context, so it was left untranslated.
7. ↑ Dear Marvel Comics; we are extremely sorry for using your most favorite fictitious metal alloy,

however, this was what was originally used in the Jap novel. I hereby claim no ill intentions upon mentioning this

8. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marchosias
9. ↑ Vinama is a mis-spelled word for Vimana, the flying chariot or temple in Sanskrit epics. Garda is another misspelled word for Garuda. However, Vimana's modern interpretation would mean aircraft. In other words, by pun, Yō has unintentionally become a aircraft of Garuda Indonesia Airlines
10. ↑ Refers to a headgear made to put down hair. I have no idea why but the only ones who call a hairband such a thing are the Japanese.
11. ↑ The process in which a bleeding wound is closed by heat or a heated object, like a hot iron rod. Hurts like hell.
12. ↑ Originally written as "Lie Star" or "Fake Star". The literal translation just sounds bad so I gave it more dignity by translating its original title.http://www.onlinefengshuistore.com/tai-sui-grand-duke-jupiter/
13. ↑ Referring to Izayoi's Pillar of Light attack.
14. ↑ For the basis of his power, read http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxwell%27s_demon

15. ↑ An onomatopoeia used to point something at another thing. Think the pose in the game Ace Attorney
16. ↑ Mommi-mommi is a onomatopoeia for squeezing something soft repeatedly. Pafu-Pafu is an onomatopoeia for being hit by something soft repeatedly. What ever that implies, I leave it to the readers imaginations
17. ↑ I added the tumbleweed, to get the same effect as the Japanese original
18. ↑ [magrefnotes: seiza- also known as the proper sitting(direct translation)]
19. ↑ [magrefnotes: kōcha means black tea, direct translation would be red tea, it means the same anyways.]
20. ↑ [magrefnotes: I'm not sure what to translate it to, so I've translated it as Outlanders.]
21. ↑ [magrefnotes: it was used as SF. So I'm leaving it in the abbreviation. Science Fiction (SF)]
22. ↑ [magrefnotes: the daughter word was only part of the meaning, the term was qian jin xiao jie, which can also mean a daughter brought up in riches, getting what she wants and other various connotations, but seeing how the context of Asuka

doesn't seem to meet up to the expectations of getting things the way she want, I just left it as daughter.]

23. ↑ [magrefnotes: Asuka is written as Flying birds in chinese characters. should be the same for japanese … :p]
24. ↑ [magrefnotes: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokyo_Skytree]
25. ↑ [magrefnotes: Konpeitō is some kind of Japanese colored sweets that have no flavors to them http://www.punipunijapan.com/konpeito/]
26. ↑ [magrefnotes: a confluence is an intersection of which two smaller streams join to make a larger river. In this case, it is two rivers joining to make a larger river. :p]
27. ↑ [magrefnotes: I notice that they always have this sound effect after Canaria's words that go something like oh, but I have not translated that, could someone get me the jap equivalent for it?]
28. ↑ [magrefnotes: will reserve this portion for change … dedication seems wrong… self sacrifice would be bad as well and the other word is devotion, may have to think up an alternative to all those.]
29. ↑ [BionicMeerkat notes - Fox ears. Kitsune = fox. Mimi = ears.]

30. ↑ [magrefnotes: woah, so many different usages of ending sounds… learning up a little to help with the accents. Quoted from nice gaijin (“What does “…ne” ” mean, 2006): ne, when placed at the end of a sentence, tends to soften the expression and make it seem more like you are inviting the other party to indicate either that they confirm what you have just said, or that they have merely been listening to you (known as 相). In terms of placement, it is similar to “yo,” but its intended meaning is quite different. ne can be used all by itself, as a way to get someone’s attention, usually to ask a question, such as Bucko’s “hey” example. (comment para 4) Source: http://www.jref.com/forum/threads/what-does-ne-mean.25458/]
31. ↑ [magrefnotes: Cool, didn’t realize that it was called a smock-frock. According to Wikipedia, it refers to the outer garment traditionally worn by rural workers, especially shepherds and waggoners. An apron like dressing and a frock under it. Lily’s dressing.]
32. ↑ [magrefnotes: According to the mixture of information from the ch translator and Wikipedia, Tairō is the position for officials in the Edo era of Japan when they work for the Tokugawa shogunate. Literally meaning great elder. Roughly comparable

to a prime minister in today's context. Second in command to the shogunate.]

33. ↑ [magrefnotes: Red Lotus TL says: This ' atmosphere of decadence' is actually translated from 'the winds of decadence']
34. ↑ [magrefnotes: I really dunno how to translate this o_O, tried the web to search for the term to describe 'one eye big, one eye small', requesting for suggestions, there are some who say that it refers to a confused face.]
35. ↑ [magrefnotes: it is metaphorically referencing to a game of soccer. I think this sounds like right, but I do not play soccer nor watch it, so I'm not confident about the phrase usage.]
36. ↑ [magrefnotes: I translate the sound of the perked up ears as pi. The word pronunciation would be beng in Chinese, but I'm sure that is not the same in Japanese. Looking for help with the sounds.]
37. ↑ [magrefnotes: entrée the starters course.]
38. ↑ [magrefnotes: itadakimasu is like Let's eat/ I humbly receive, I will be tucking in. I converted it back to Japanese because my guess is that the meaning is lost if I translate the Chinese version which would be 'I won't stand on occasion then.']
39. ↑ [magrefnotes: waterwheel http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/miniwaterwheel1.jpg]

40. ↑ [magrefnotes: should I change it to japanese as Tsuyoi Dansei Dolls? Strong men dolls sound weird … XD but it is supposed to be weird :P]
41. ↑ [magrefnotes: please note that the sound of charging bravely and WUOOOOHHHHH sounds alike in jap.]
42. ↑ [magrefnotes: Coppelia is a ballet play about a story of a doll maker and yeah, dolls.]
43. ↑ [magrefnotes: Just a little side information, the phrase for clear and destroy is just one character difference, so it is a pun or something that I will not be able to catch in English.]
44. ↑ [magrefnotes: the ch translator wrote the English as Dragon Greif, and I think that means it is in the real text as well… but just gonna use Dragon Greif for now. The other names will still be Draco Greif.]
45. ↑ [magrefnotes: I got no idea what the Golden Demon mirror means but there seems to be an acclaimed Japanese epic about the destructive powers of wealth on the lives of 2 starcrossed lovers in medieval Japan written by Koyo Ozaki, Konjiki Yasha 1953.]
46. ↑ [magrefnotes: Ningyo means doll in english… just for fun in japanese…or it would be doll-san maybe

these conversation parts may need to have a font size decrease or something, but just a suggestion. My guess is that these are all whispers.]

47. ↑ [BionicMeerkat notes - the most important reason or purpose for someone or something's existence.]
48. ↑ [magrefnotes: the direct translation of the phrase End Emptiness would have been Winds of Decadence.]
49. ↑ [magrefnotes:“徘Last Décadence”direct translation is (The wandering eschatology) According to wiki, Eschatology, from two Greek words meaning “last” (σατ) and “study” (-α), is the study of ‘end things’, whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, the end of the world and the nature of the Kingdom of God.ch translator’s noteDécadencehas the meaning of decay .“Greed Crown”can also be directly translated as ‘ The Tyrant of the Ends of Time’]
50. ↑ [magrefnotes: This point onwards, I’m using direct translation of winds of Decadence instead of End Emptiness. Faster for me to direct translate.]
51. ↑ [magrefnotes: Although translated to my Community in this case, it can also be translated into my household, my home, my family.]
52. ↑ [magrefnotes: decadent was used even if it sounds too big a word for this description. As the ch

translator noted, it might be possible that the author is hinting at the possible relation between the theory and the winds itself.]

53. ↑ [magrefnotes: they used 参, I've always translated it as strategist. But the direct translation would be at staff officer in the military. According to wiki, the role played by this position would be the administrative, operational and logistical needs of the unit. Looking for a term to replace strategist.]